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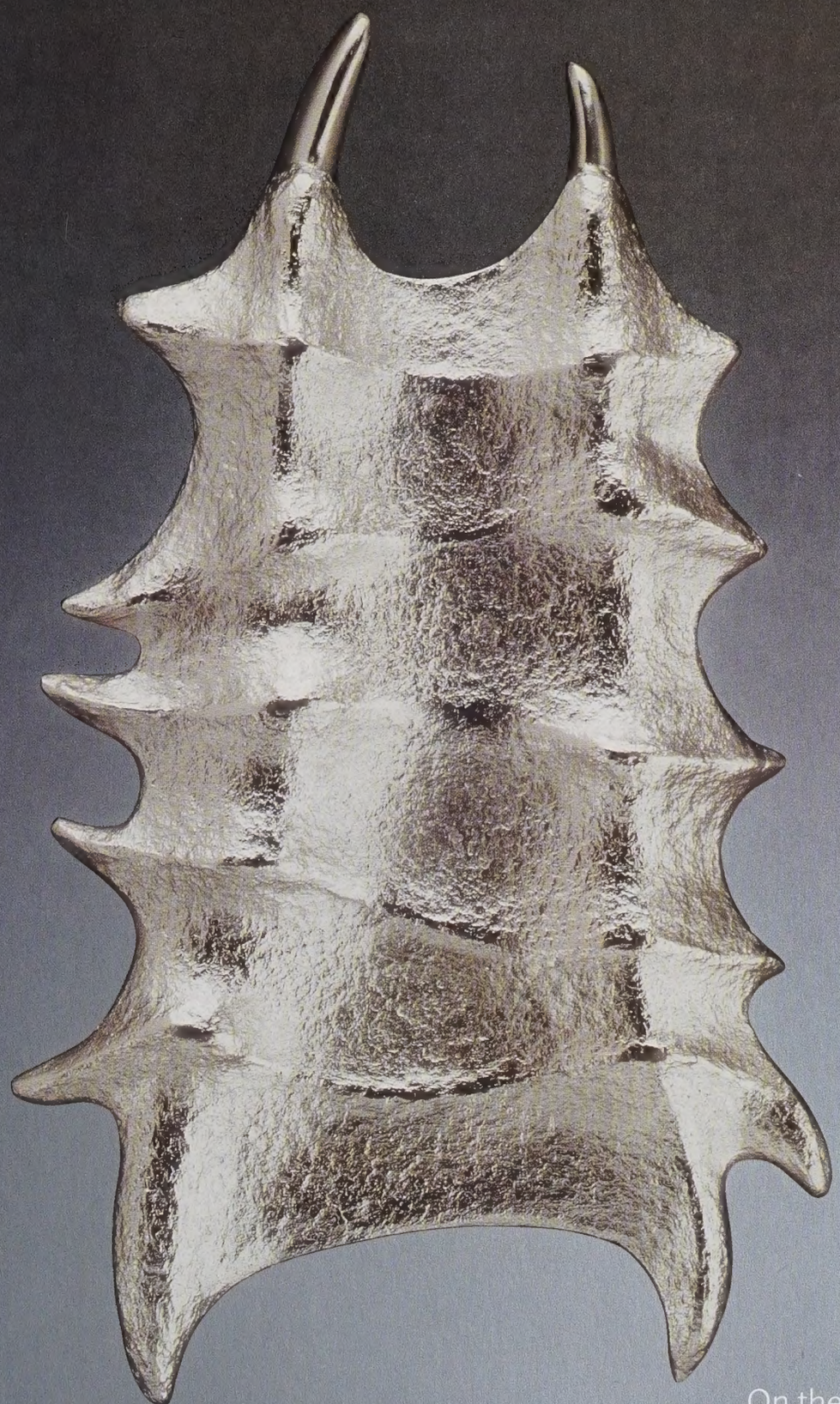

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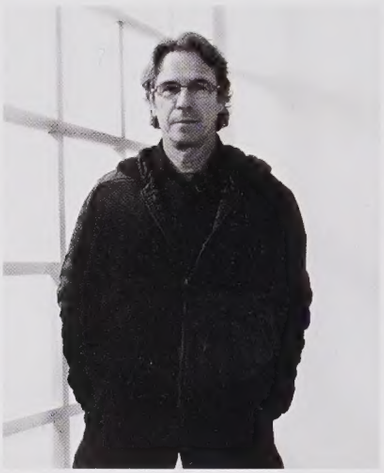
On the Cusp

Pilgrimage to Paradox

Love in Three Dimensions



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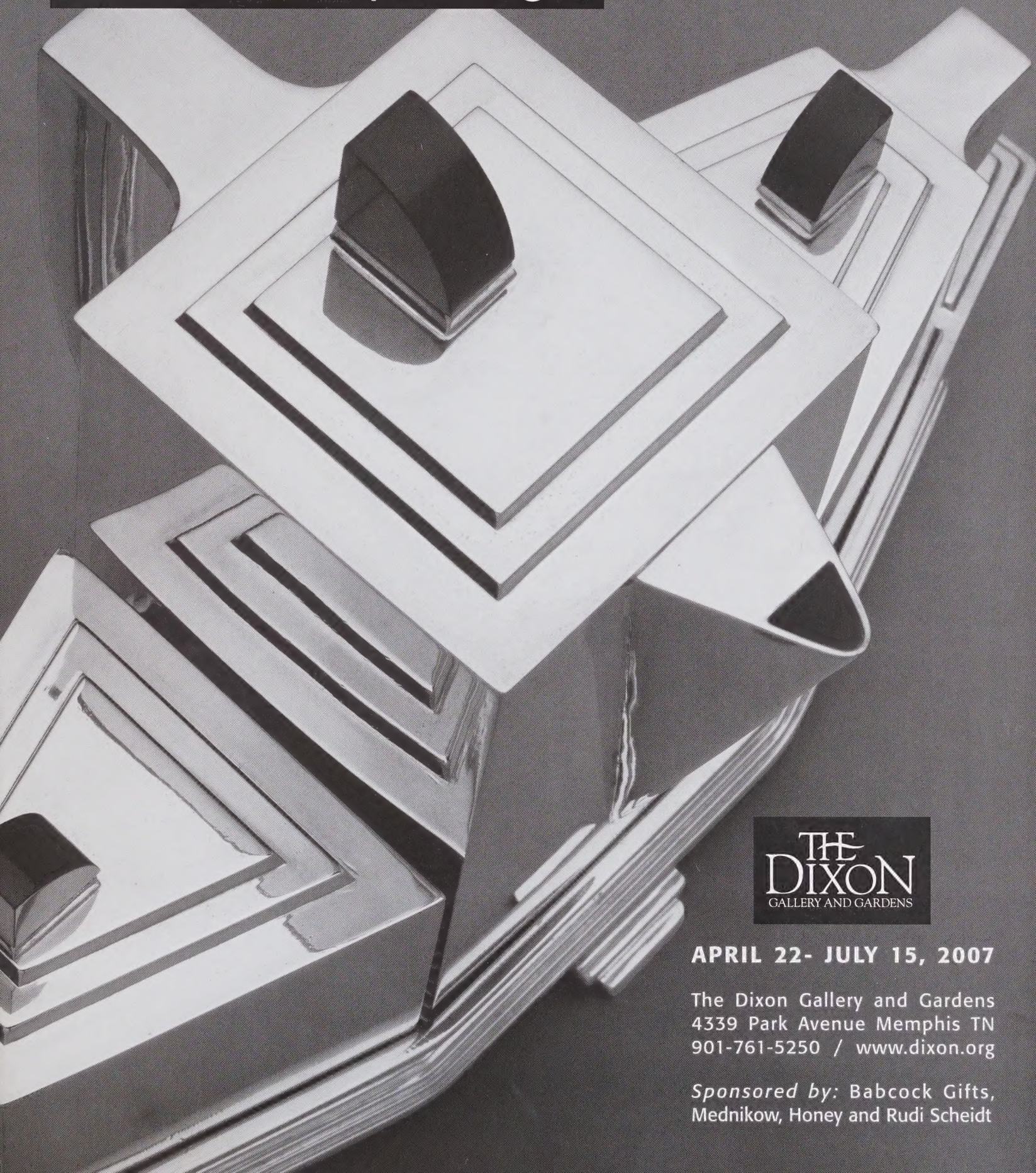

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Robert Ebendorf
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Klaus Bürgel
Kudzu, 2006 (detail)

cover
Claire Holliday
Sea Seed No. 1 (brooch), 2005
fine silver
2 1/2 x 1 3/8 x 3/16"
Photo: Dean Powell

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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

One of the most basic and compelling plots in literature is the quest. From the ancient tale of Homer's *Odyssey* to the legend of the Holy Grail to *The Wizard of Oz*, time after time protagonists wend their way through obstacles towards a desired goal. A similar narrative shapes the creative stories of many visual artists, as they encounter a range of difficulties en route to rewarding work. In some cases the journey involves great physical exertion, and in others it is a challenging venture of the mind.

This issue of *Metalsmith* is filled with tales of quest and questioning. The artist couple Svetozar and Ruth Radakovich had to overcome many barriers in order to fulfill their love, obtain political freedom, and realize their talents. As Toni Greenbaum recounts, Svetozar's early life "reads like a heady wartime novel," including his internment in a POW camp, and recurring escapes and captures. Ruth's courage and determination helped secure his release, and together their lives were "personally devoted, politically heroic, technically astute, and aesthetically alluring."

The artistic pursuit of Klaus Bürgel began as an intellectual inquiry—"the attempt to touch the infinite through pure expression, unhindered by social reference" —but has since veered toward worldly engagement. "I feel like letting more life back into my work," Burgel says, and his trajectory reveals how quests can change mid-course or have one goal supplanted by another.

As the title of our feature on Robert Ebendorf, "Pilgrimage to Paradox," suggests, the artist has embarked into unknown, and perhaps unknowable, regions. According to author Glen Brown, Ebendorf's recent series of badges based on religious medallions "lay no claims to answers but, on the contrary, seem to enshrine the questions that drive the quest." With no clear message or goal in sight, they "celebrate an unending journey toward impenetrable mystery."

The protagonist in our article on metal clay is a novel material. Only a decade old, the medium has come a long way, but still faces great hurdles to broader acceptance. Other new materials and techniques, including lost wax casting and electroforming, encountered similar skepticism when first introduced. The conclusion of this metalsmithing story, like the others relayed here, is uncertain, but it remains a gripping saga to pursue...

METALSMITH

a publication of SNAG, the organization for jewelers, designers and metalsmiths

***Metalsmith's* mission is to document, analyze, and promote excellence in jewelry and metalworking.**

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Metalsmith (ISSN 0270-1146) is published in January, March, May, August, and October by SNAG, a not-for-profit organization, 540 Oak Street, Suite A, Eugene, OR 97401.
www.snagmetalsmith.org

Annual Subscription
to *Metalsmith* (5 issues): $29 North America, $41 foreign
SNAG one-year membership rates include a subscription to *Metalsmith*: $69 North America, $85 foreign
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The full text of *Metalsmith* is available through EBSCO Publishing and *Art Index*.

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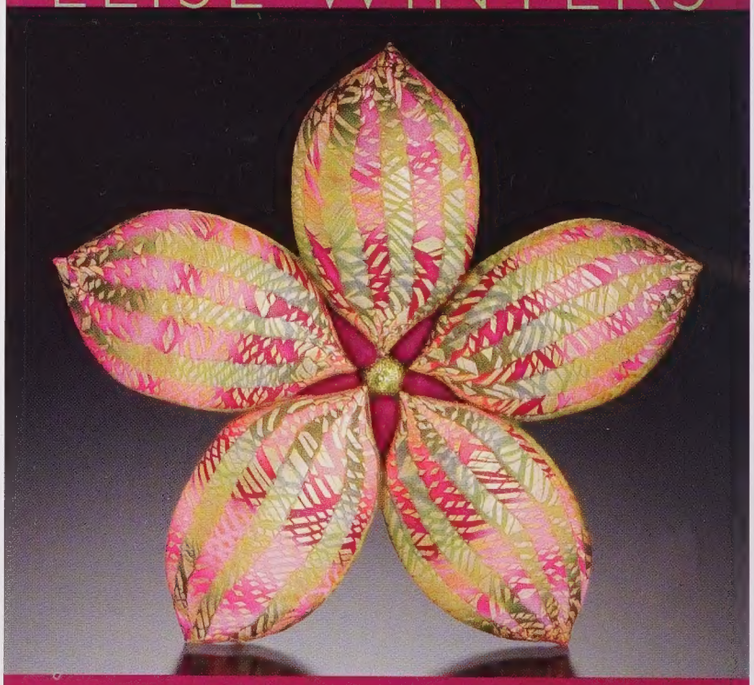

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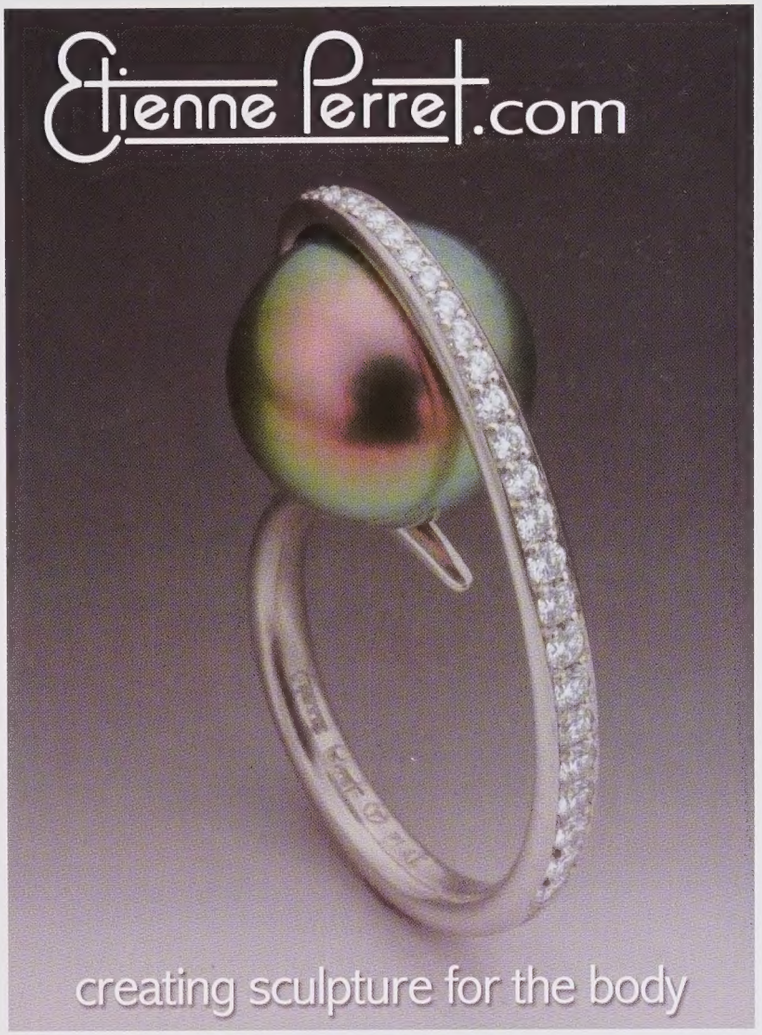

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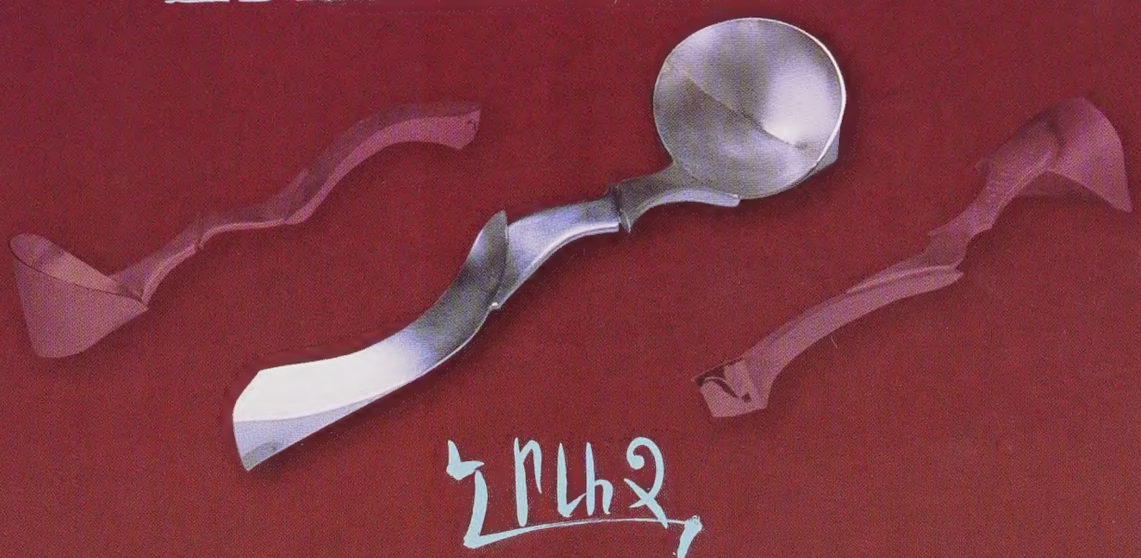

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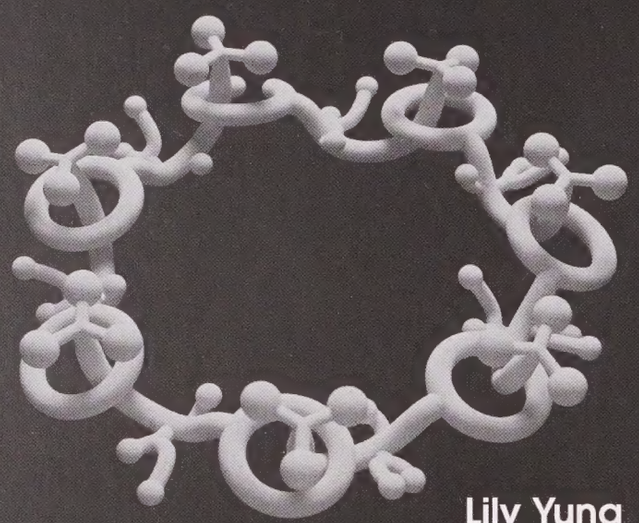

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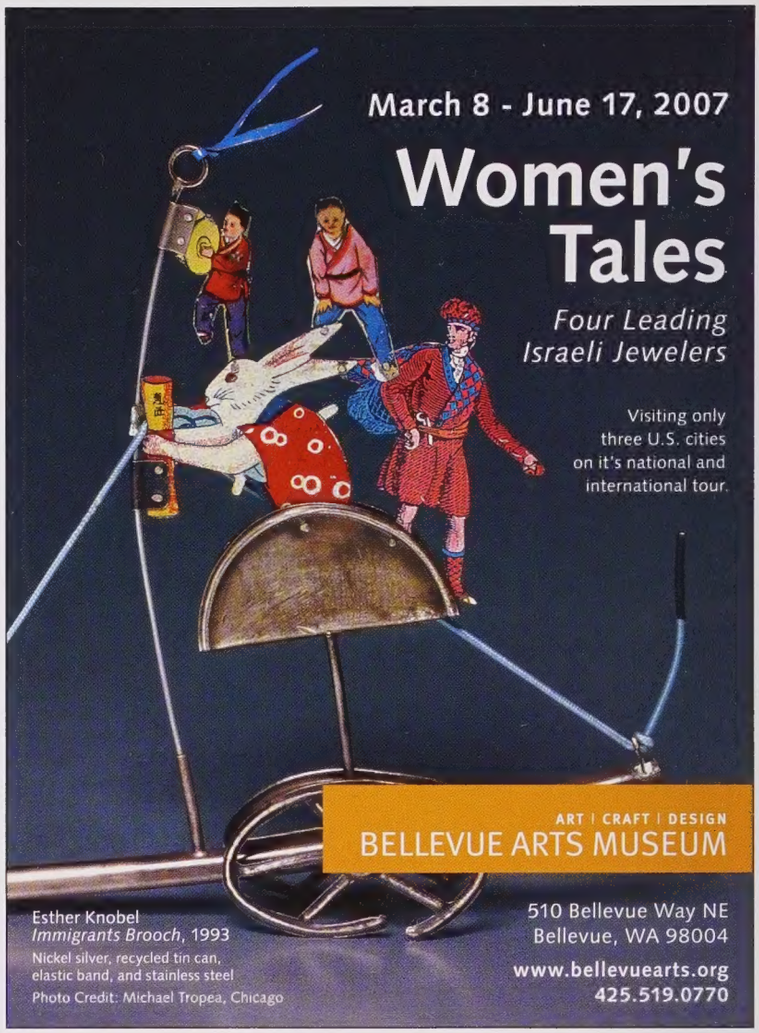
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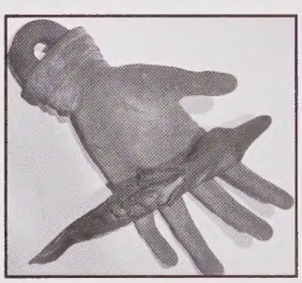

Von Allen, *The Alchemist's Hand*, 2006, Clay

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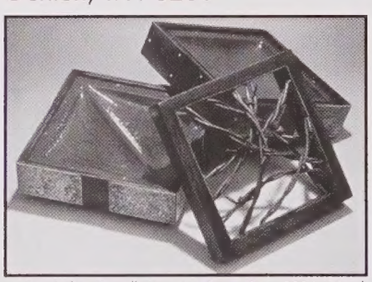

Jan Arthur Harrell, *Houston Bento Box*, 2006, Mixed

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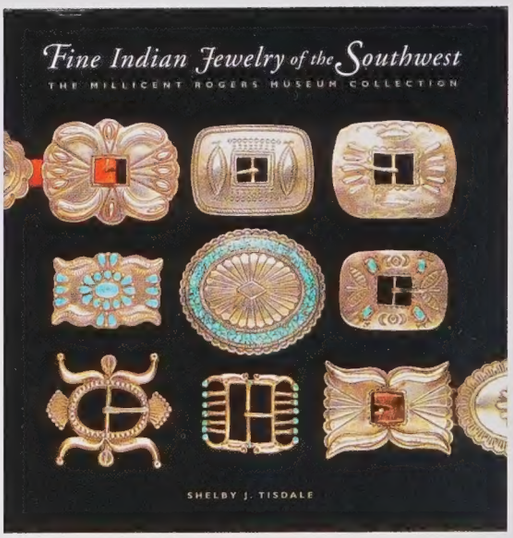
by Andrea DiNoto



Fine Indian Jewelry of the Southwest: The Millicent Rogers Museum Collection

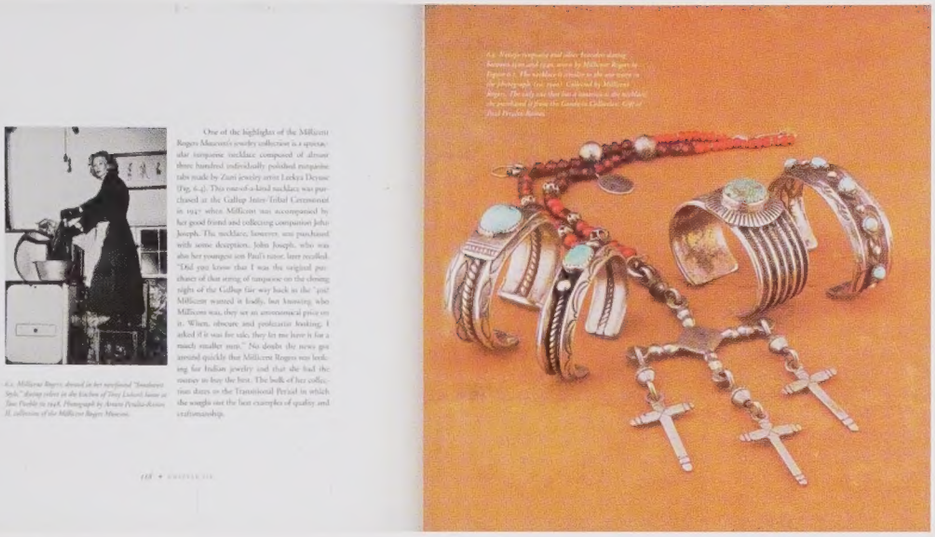
Shelby J. Tisdale

Museum of New Mexico Press, Santa Fe, 2006

The Millicent Rogers Museum in Taos, New Mexico, holds one of the world's finest collections of Native American jewelry, notable for its unimpeachable authenticity as well as for the aesthetic eye that guided its original acquisitions. That it was assembled not by a grizzled ethnographer, but by Rogers, a gorgeous blonde Jazz-Age heiress—a fashion icon who wore couture clothes and hung out with royalty, movie stars, prominent politicians, artists, and writers—makes it all the more extraordinary. The story of how the collection came to be is the subject of this handsome coffee-table book, in which biography and history are entwined and illuminated by hundreds of fine full-color photos.

Author Shelby J. Tisdale, Ph.D., a former director of the museum, begins with a biographical chapter on Rogers, who died in 1953 at the age of 50. She then surveys the key historical periods in the stylistic and technical evolution of Southwestern jewelry: a prehistory chapter traces the origins of ancient beadwork in the Southwest and the early mining of turquoise; "The Beginning of Silverwork" discusses Spanish influence in the area, where Native Americans first learned metalwork from Spanish and Mexican smiths, then perfected their skills during the infamous Bosque Redondo incarceration; the "Classic Period (1880–1900)" sees the flowering of native silverwork; the "Transitional Period (1900–1950)" covers commercialization and the development of strong tribal styles; and the "Innovation Period (1950–present)" shows the work of prominent contemporary artists, like Charles Loloma, who have achieved worldwide recognition. Tisdale concludes with a chapter on Rogers as an artist and designer, whose own pieces were often interpretations of traditional Native American styles.

While numerous books have been written on the history and techniques of Native American jewelry (many of which are referenced in Tisdale's bibliography), few are as well illustrated as this one. And none have focused so fully on Rogers the collector and humanitarian, who so effectively used social clout to bring artistic recognition and social justice to the Navajo and Pueblo peoples. Tisdale lays out the glittering details of Rogers's life, which seems right out of an Edith Wharton novel. Born in 1902, she was the granddaughter of steel and copper magnate Henry Huttleston Rogers, who later became John D. Rockefeller's partner in launching Standard Oil. She was raised in the rarefied social circles of New York City and Southampton, Long Island, where the Rogers's beach estate was in fact a Florentine Medici palace that had been transported piece by piece. When Rogers contracted rheumatic fever, and the consequent enlarged heart, at age 8, she developed, says Tisdale, "a thirst for living in the moment and an acute awareness of how short and unpredictable life can be." Of her three marriages, the first, to a fortune-hunting Austrian count, left her with a son. Her second marriage to Arturo Peralta-Ramos, an Argentine aristocrat, produced two more sons, Arturo and Paul, both of whom would contribute much to the establishment and collections of the Millicent Rogers Museum after her death. While her sons were attending school in Switzerland, Rogers maintained homes in Austria and Venice; then in 1940, after the outbreak of World War II, she resettled her family in the Tidewater region of Virginia. At Claremont Manor, her colonial estate, she entertained scores of celebrities, from fashion doyenne Diana Vreeland to "007" creator Ian Fleming. A third marriage ended in divorce, and from 1942 to 1945, Rogers offered her home as a rehab center for shell-shocked and injured Navy pilots. After devoting much time to war-relief efforts, she moved to California in 1946, where she became



There, Rogers's eyes were opened to the unique beauty of the landscape, the vibrant art scene, and, most importantly, the indigenous peoples, whose jewelry she instantly recognized as worthy of serious collecting.

romantically involved with no less a star than Clark Gable. Distraught when the romance fizzled, she was persuaded by her friends, actress Janet Gaynor and her husband, the couturier Adrian, to join them on a trip to the Southwest. There, Rogers's eyes were opened to the unique beauty of the landscape, the vibrant art scene, and, most importantly, the indigenous peoples, whose jewelry she instantly recognized as worthy of serious collecting. Rogers fell in love with the Taos region and established a home there. Tisdale quotes Rogers's son Arturo, who recalled that his mother "came here fascinated by the meaning of the place, and ended up finding the meaning of her own life." Millicent's collecting was inextricably linked to her advocacy for Native American rights and issues.

Although Rogers's time in Taos was relatively brief, she acquired some 3,000 pieces between 1947 and 1953, prime collecting years as it turned out, focusing on Navajo and Zuni silver and turquoise, Hopi silverwork, and Pueblo stone and shell jewelry. She also collected baskets, textiles, and furniture and Hispano devotional art. Rogers's sons Arturo and Paul Peralta Ramos, together with Mary Benjamin Rogers, their grandmother, established a museum in 1956, which Tisdale says "has become one of America's most important repositories for the aesthetic achievements of the Native American and Hispano cultures of the Southwest." It has occupied its present adobe-style building since 1968. Oddly, there are no photos of the museum, either exterior or interior, in this book.

Beyond relating Rogers's fascinating personal story, *Fine Indian Jewelry of the Southwest* offers students and collectors of both antique and contemporary (post-1970s) jewelry a valuable guide to what is authentic in a field rife with tourist items, knock-offs, and outright fakes being produced abroad. A short chapter is devoted to these difficult subjects, describing how imitation Navajo jewelry was being produced for the tourist trade as early as 1910 in Denver by a company using non-Indian labor. Soon enough, the market was flooded—as it is today—with cheap tourist jewelry, often of foreign manufacture. The book's well-researched historical sections, coupled with its fine illustrations, serve to train the mind and eye of anyone seeking to acquire genuine, well-designed, historically important pieces. Many close-ups show details of silverwork, inlay, and other techniques used by Native American artisans in creating their classic designs. Groupings of like objects—Navajo belt buckles, for example—helpfully demonstrate how different techniques, such as stamp work, repoussé, cast work, and inlay were used to produce a dazzling variety of styles in the late 1800s. The chapter on the "Innovation Period (1950–present)" shows many outstanding pieces by notable artists like Charles Loloma (Hopi) and the team of Yazzie Johnson (Navajo) and Gail Bird (Santo Domingo/Laguna), together with their hallmarks. Only in the 1970s did makers begin to sign their work with any regularity.

When Millicent Rogers posed in the *Vogue* magazine studios in 1948, wearing Charles James couture accessorized with armloads of her own Navajo bracelets and rings, she was testifying to the enduring beauty of Native American designs. This book extends her legacy and confirms her vision.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York–based writer who specializes in art and design.

STUDIO

by Claire Sanford

Mary Hughes and Caro-Gray Bosca

Gloucester, Massachusetts: When Mary Hughes recently got a metal detector as a gift, she couldn't have been more delighted. She and business partner Caro-Gray Bosca immediately went into the nearby Dogtown woods on a quest for stuff. While most high-end jewelers don't get some of their best materials with this method, Hughes and Bosca aren't like most jewelers working in gold, platinum, and diamonds. On their first foray, they found some superb rusted nuts and bolts and had a hell of a good time. "We never laughed so much," admits Hughes. But these sorts of resources are serious business to these women. Hanging on the wall in Hughes's Side Street Gallery is a length of old rusted chain pulled from an abandoned granite quarry. Years ago, Hughes scaled down the exact proportions of the three-inch crusty links and made beautifully textured 18k gold chains, which she and Bosca still use for many of their necklaces. It's all about the integrity of the original objects.

Most artists have a studio sanctuary, a singular space where work and designing occurs. There isn't really one spot that embodies or defines Hughes and Bosca and the jewelry they collaboratively produce, however. Between them they have two studios and the gallery, but the spark and electricity that characterizes their work seems to occur outside of any four walls. They are in perpetual motion: Bosca rows competitively, and Hughes gardens, paints, and takes her enormous Anatolian Shepherd dogs for daily walks.

While they have their differences, Hughes and Bosca share a common aesthetic, and neither is afraid to take a risk. Inspiration can come from the materials used, particularly the antiquities they often incorporate. Their work is transformative, whether it's taking an old Roman medical instrument and making it precious or taking a 3,000-year-old Tibetan gold bead and rendering it precious *again*. In either case, they want to present the objects with respect and with the same sense of discovery. This finding of "treasure," whether it is an ancient coin, a rusted bolt, or the pregnant form of an Allium bud, is part and parcel to their work.

The pair's collaboration happened, quite literally, by accident. Bosca flew airplanes as a banner tow pilot, but after a bad mishap, she decided that flying wasn't her future. This led, circuitously, to an apprenticeship with a jeweler who specializes in platinum work and high-end stone setting, and then, to working for Hughes. When it became clear that Bosca's stone-setting skills and refined eye worked in a reciprocal way to Hughes's bolder approach, and that collaboration worked better than a traditional employer-employee relationship, Hughes and Bosca never looked back.

Both Hughes and Bosca are as indomitable and exuberant as the jewelry they create. This jewelry isn't for wimps. Bold, oversized and containing the weight of true substance, their work combines an incredible array of precious, ancient, and "just plain old" objects. It has guts and presence, and incorporates beautiful but unlikely combinations of materials: 18k gold, diamonds, and an old rusted two-inch bolt, for example. These combinations oblige the viewer to address questions of preciousness, beauty and value. This is not the subtle rusted elegance that jeweler Pat Flynn embodies so well; instead, it is a spirited statement of the qualities inherent in the materials they use. Thick-edged, heavily textured and generous in proportion, their work features a level of meticulous detail that belies its seeming ruggedness. Most of their jewelry shouts its existence, rather than being a fashion accent. Produced primarily in collections, the series' initial concept undergoes many thematic variations, often leading to unexpected ends.

Several collections have been inspired by the natural forms found in Hughes's prolific gardens. Throughout most of the year, they are an explosion of fabulous shapes, brilliant colors, and abundance. In the spring, the walkway to Hughes's house is lined with hundreds of peonies, poppies, and irises. In the summer, the palette changes, but the wonderful excess remains. Even late in the fall, the gardens are full of onions, Brussels sprouts, and fading sunflowers.

Hughes's house is one of the creative centers of the partnership, and is jam-packed with inspiration. Entering through the front door one is greeted by colorfully painted walls, bold ceramic forms, music, and the huge, insistent noses of Okie and Pasha, the resident pony-sized dogs. The living room is an unlikely combination of art objects, rusted farm implements and paintings; these are things Hughes has made, traded, or collected over the years. The act of entering this home encapsulates the collaborative process that Hughes and Bosca share. Depending on the season, walking up the front path takes one past the sensual contours of a deep orange pumpkin, a pink-lipped tulip bud, or a mottled purple bean pod.

Mary Hughes and Caro-Gray Bosca
at Side Street Gallery, January 2007
Photo: Claire Sanford

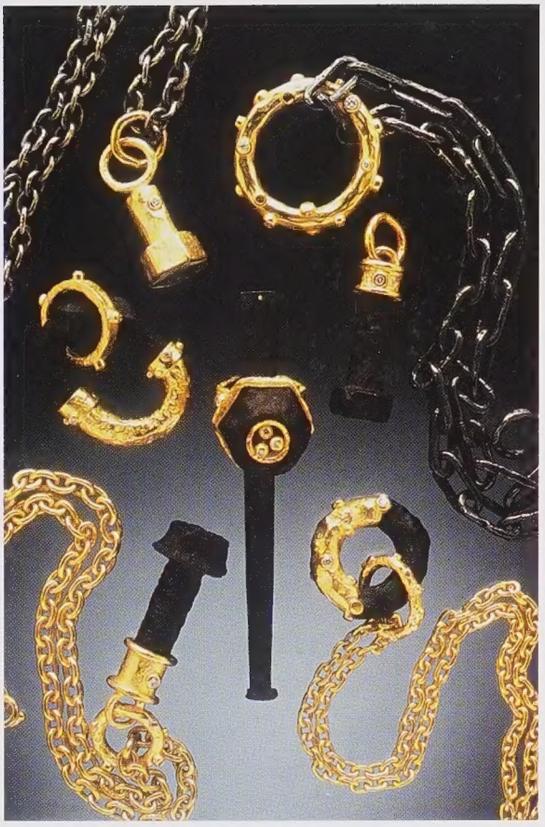
Once inside the studio, these images join with the trays of luscious materials that Hughes and Bosca have collected. Deep-red coral, bright-blue turquoise, and iridescent pearls sit side by side with tiny Roman bronzes, old Afghani beads, and bits and pieces dredged from the Thames River. It all makes sense: the outside becomes the inside becomes the jewelry.

Their studios couldn't be more different. Hughes's is bright and sunny, an extension of her colorful house. Bosca's studio is located in the back room of a plating factory, up a dark and creaky staircase, wedged in beside old stakes and hammers. Both studios share a wonderful collection of pitted and marked anvils, steel plates, and hammers, and both are deceptively simple. Bosca's space, in particular, is a study in economy. The jewelry she works on emerges out of the gloom like tiny flowers in a desert. The roughly textured hammers and steel plates are used consistently and energetically throughout the different collections. Forging, and Hughes's background in blacksmithing, results in work with heft and dimension. Bosca's talent for carving directly in gold adds a different formal language, often manifested in sensual vine and leaf-like elements.

What starts as idea and raw material in the studio eventually ends up on exhibit at Side Street Gallery. Founded by Hughes in 1990, the gallery is tucked under a huge tree in the old artist colony of Rocky Neck, along the working waterfront of Gloucester. This compact and densely packed gallery space showcases their work as well as that of other jewelers, glass artists, furniture makers and painters. Entering the gallery through its steel grillwork of vines and flowers feels akin to walking into a treasure chest, with an abundance of rich and sensual elements. The display of Hughes-Bosca jewelry is like Hughes's garden at the height of its flowery excess.

The fine art of collaboration is tricky, but Hughes and Bosca make it appear seamless and effortless. It's hard to see where one person's ideas end and the other's begin. In a world that places a high value on one's name and singular vision, Hughes and Bosca are almost an anomaly, both working anonymously behind the design aesthetic that is Hughes-Bosca. This may seem an obvious necessity, but to actually implement true collaboration takes an enormous leap of faith. Both cite trust as the main ingredient to their success: trust in the other's judgment, taste, direction, and, ultimately, in the high level of craftsmanship the work entails. "If you have high standards, you have to live by them," states Hughes. In addition, she says that, "...there shouldn't be ego attached to art. If someone is successful, that doesn't make them better." But successful they are. Ultimately, Hughes and Bosca share a common aesthetic language, but they also balance one another, which keeps the process fresh and the work strong. ◘

Claire Sanford is a metalsmith, jeweler, and partner in Top Dog Studio in Gloucester, Massachusetts.



clockwise from above left
Mary Hughes's jewelry studio
Photo: Claire Sanford

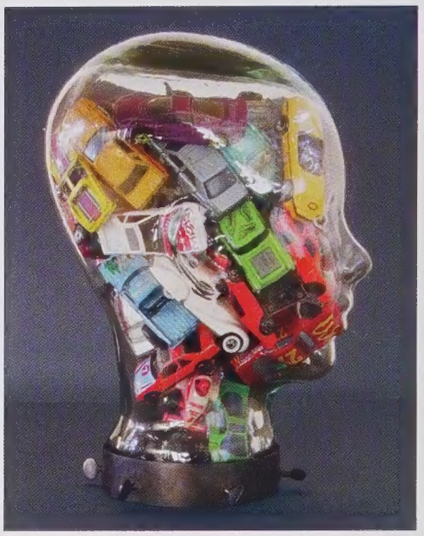
The jewelry studio of Caro-Gray Bosca
Photo: Claire Sanford

Selection of pendants by Hughes-Bosca featuring naturally weathered steel, 18k gold and diamonds
Photo: Powell Photography

Front door of the Side Street Gallery, in Gloucester, Massachusetts, run by Mary Hughes
Photo: Claire Sanford

POSSESSED

by Susan Kingsley



Owning Up: What it Means to Possess

According to cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard, every object has two functions—to be put to use and to be possessed—and the two functions stand in an inverse relationship to each other.[1] The more useful something is, the less it functions as a possession. When an object is completely devoid of use, Baudrillard wrote, it ". . . stops being defined by its function, its meaning is entirely up to the subject."[2] As private property, it is attached to one person and its function is defined by and within that relationship. At this extreme, an object becomes abstracted and its status is entirely subjective. Think of an antique coin, a shell, an African mask, an Elvis ashtray, a high-heeled shoe. These are possessions that might be used in unique ways in a collection, or as a souvenir, or as a fetish. Our intimacy with and attachment to the useless objects we possess is the subject of this inquiry. It is time to own up.

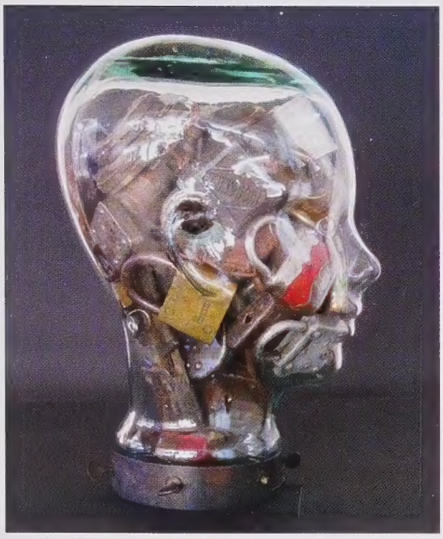
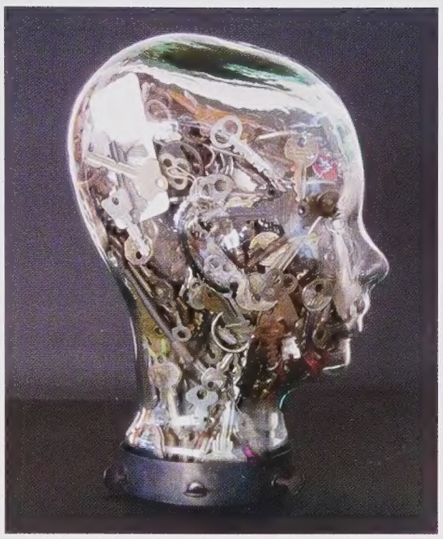
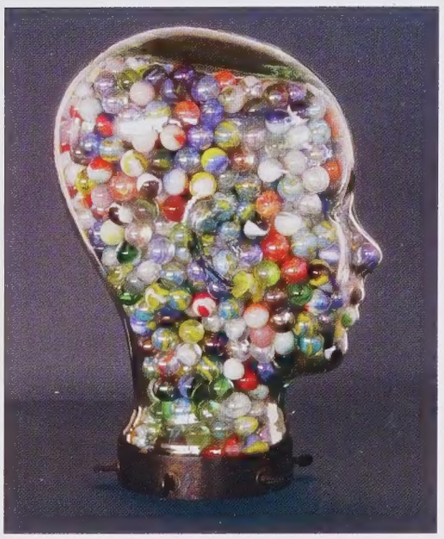
Collecting has been called a thrill, a mania, a madness, a passion—and bliss. How can we understand the drive to keep, save, search, crave, and enjoy collecting objects? How do we explain why collecting can be so infinitely pleasurable? Nearly everyone does it. Bottle caps, baseball cards, Barbies, model trains, antique cars, dolls, teapots, teddy bears, clocks, stamps, art, frogs. Books, postcards, hats, shoes, jewelry. Pots. Plants. Cats. What is collecting all about?

The activity of collecting is not casual or accidental. It is not the mere hoarding or accumulation of objects. Collecting is intimately connected to culture and is dependent on a context of acquisition and the principles of organization and categorization. Children attempt to learn about the world by arranging, classifying and manipulating objects.[7] As adults, we collect for the opposite reason. Collecting is a way to create a different world, one that is our own, one that reflects the self. Searching, ordering, and displaying collections provide an escape from everyday life. Collecting objects distances them from their origins and places them in a new context; a private, personal world, a place for forgetting, a site for reverie. Baudrillard describes it as a place for the "everyday prose of objects to be transformed into poetry, into a triumphant, unconscious discourse."[4] Susan Stewart likewise sees collecting as "a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context."[5]

Collectors are constantly in the process of creating an identity and at the same time projecting their being onto the objects they have chosen as possessions. It has been said that "the collector's taste is a mirror of self."[6] Anthropologist James Clifford has similarly observed, "Identity, whether cultural or personal, presupposes acts of collection, the gathering up of possessions in arbitrary systems of value and meaning."[7] Each object is a reflection of the collector and a personal narrative is created.

The collector lives within the collection, continuously transforming and being transformed by collecting, classifying, and ordering more objects. The process of collecting continues, Baudrillard explains, because "in the passionate abstractness of possession all objects are equivalent. And just one object no longer suffices: the fulfillment of the project of possession always means a succession or even a complete series of objects."[8] It is the goal of the totalizing collector to possess a complete category or a complete series. It is not simply to own or control the items in the collection, but to "exercise control over existence itself through possession of every sample, every specimen, every instance of an unrepeatable and nowhere duplicated series."[9] The collection may present itself in a pedagogical, edifying manner, but the collector is not necessarily a connoisseur of the objects. A connoisseur loves objects on the basis of their varied and unique charm, while a collector loves objects on the basis of their membership in a series.

Susan Kingsley
Cars, 2006
copper, found objects
12 x 6 x 8"

Distance is key to understanding the souvenir. Because the object exists in the present but lives in memory, the gap between the present and the past sustains desire and longing for authentic experience that can never take place.

Among so many objects no single one is particularly important, unless it is the one that is missing from the series. In its absence, it becomes the most important.

"Collecting replaces history with classification. Space and time are rearranged in such a way that the world is accounted for by the elements of the collection."[10] Antiquities are the most perfect of possessions for collecting, as they signify time itself. The more distant its temporal origin, the greater an object's value as a possession. Baudrillard explained that "the older the object, the closer it brings us to an earlier age, to 'divinity,' to nature, to primitive knowledge."[11] This kind of reverence for antiquities has existed since the Middle Ages, when relics of saints were displayed in churches and were objects of pilgrimages. It was believed that being in close proximity to, if not actually seeing or touching, such objects transferred qualities of the holy person to the faithful believer.

As collected objects are removed from their natural origins, the labor of their production is erased. The labor of the collector replaces the labor of the maker. Labor takes place through the manipulation of abstraction rather than physically, through material, and the collection itself is the production. Existing objects are merely found, or "captured," by the collector, says Stewart. "The collector constructs a narrative of luck which replaces the narrative of production."[12]

Certain possessions are valued foremost for their narrative content. These possessions are not collected as parts of a series; they stand alone. The solitary, useless object that relates to its possessor through a narrative is a souvenir. Think of the personal, the specific: a picture postcard, a plastic Eiffel Tower on a key chain, a shell pocketed during a walk on a distant beach, ribbon from a prom corsage, a worn-out college athletic department t-shirt, a silver bracelet from Mexico.

Souvenirs are incomplete in themselves. Removed from their origins, they exist as fragmentary reminders of past experiences. According to Stewart, a souvenir "must remain impoverished and partial so that it can be supplemented by narrative discourse."[13] They inhabit a personal world of distant memories and myth, a place beyond the present. Souvenirs are emblematic of the nostalgia that narrative reveals. Souvenirs exist because of desire, a longing for origin and authenticity. Authenticity lies in lived experience, in the relationship of the body to the phenomonological world. While the souvenir seeks to authenticate a past or otherwise remote experience, the souvenir object, in fact, becomes the point of origin for the narrative. It displaces authentic experience in the "beyond, in which the antique, pastoral, exotic and other fictive domains are articulated."[14] Although the narrative of a souvenir suggests transcendence, authentic experience can only be imagined. Distance is key to understanding the souvenir. Because the object exists in the present but lives in memory, the gap between the present and the past sustains desire and longing for authentic experience that can never take place. If, as Stewart states, "Nostalgia is sadness without an object,"[15] souvenirs are nostalgic objects that contain and sustain a narrative of loss, longing, and desire.

Unlike "useless" objects, the collected object, and the souvenir, some objects are desired because they are believed to possess a kind of magic. The word for this type of object, "fetish," is of a

left to right
Susan Kingsley
Locks, 2006
copper, found objects
12 x 6 x 8"

Keys, 2006
copper, found objects
12 x 6 x 8"

Marbles, 2006
copper, found objects
12 x 6 x 8"

"sinister pedigree" and usually associated with "otherness" and notions of the "primitive."[16] The fact is that our culture is no different than any other when it comes to being charmed and enchanted by material objects. We do believe that certain objects embody power to affect our lives and wellbeing. Recent investigations of this peculiar mode of possession indicate that it is a valuable "tool" for undermining monolithic belief systems; philosophical, patriarchal, anthropological, psychological.

In its earliest sense, fetishism was understood by Europeans as their African trade partners's primitive religious veneration of material objects. But they misunderstood the African practice of valuing particular objects as actual material embodiments of truths.[17] They did not comprehend how personal or social value could be attributed to material objects whose only "natural" values were, in their thinking,

In the 21st century, abstracting, manipulating, and controlling what we own reflects human behavior, rather than proof of correctness or universal truths about the world or our objects.

instrumental and commercial. They assumed that the African mind was unable to distinguish between personal religious objects and aesthetic ornaments and decided that the African social order was irrational and chaotic. Africans, on the other hand, did not understand the European's dependence on "rational" institutional systems for valuing things. Their "value objects" included religious, aesthetic, erotic, talismanic, and oath "vehicles," as well as commodifiable objects of economic value such as gold.[18] The result, according to William Pietz, was that "Africa perverted Western capitalism (forcing it to adopt the superstitious worship of material objects) just as European capitalists perverted indigenous economies through exploitation."[19]

Diamond rings, gold chains, Rolex watches, perfume, furs, outrageously overpriced designer clothing, athletic shoes, tanned fit bodies, Ralph Lauren rooms, "natural" herbal remedies, "organically

top
Collector Christopher Walters with his fraternity pin collection
Photo: Christopher Walters
Courtesy Columbia News Service

above
Selection of a fraternity pin collection including examples from Delta Psi, Kappa Sigma, and Kappa Sigma Kappa
Photo: Christopher Walters
Courtesy Columbia News Service

grown" foods, luxury automobiles: We desire certain objects not because they are useful or collectible, but because we believe that something within them has power to transform our lives. All of these examples, it should be noted, are items that are worn close to the body, enclose it, enter it or enhance it.

These things are fetishes because of the artificial values that we have instilled in them. Karl Marx wrote about the alienation of labor and the substitution of material objects for social exchange between people in *Das Kapital*, pointing out the mystical and enigmatic character of what he named "commodity fetishism." He likened it to developments in "mist-enveloped regions of the religious world," where products of the human brain, ideas, took on a life of their own.

Yet another interpretation of the fetish, not rooted in economic theory, has taken precedence in popular culture, namely the fetish as sexual perversion. Based on Sigmund Freud's theories, it is believed that the sexual fetish draws its power from an early sexual encounter and is a stand-in, a substitute for, an authentic real life experience. The thousands of references to this interpretation of the fetish on the Internet illustrate the magic of fetishization, its ability to commodify nearly everything, even the concept of the sexual fetish itself.

These types of ownership—collections, souvenirs, and fetishes—are not absolute or fixed. Shoes provide an example. We all use (wear) shoes. A pair of strappy, red satin, four-inch spike-heeled shoes could be used—if you could walk in them. They could be boxed and languishing at the back of a closet, souvenirs of trip to New York and a night on the town. The same shoes might eventually end up as part of someone's collection—of red shoes. Or, as sexually fetishized objects, these "red spikes" might be possessed and exhibited for their erotic effect.

An example of how jewelry can be prized for deeply conflicting reasons is found in Greek letter pins, which have become embroiled in a controversy. On one side are organization members for whom the pins are treasured symbols of the ideals to which they solemnly pledged. For some of them, the pin is a fetish, an object valued as a magical source of connection to a fraternal organization that must be protected so as not to compromise the larger group. On the other side are collectors, people who treasure the pins for their history, beauty, preciousness, rarity, symbolism and uniqueness.

The *New York Times* described the conflict as a battle between collectors and "Greek" groups attempting to "rescue" and return pins to their original owners.[20] The Greeks outbid collectors in eBay auctions and track down and confront collectors, demanding that the "badges" be returned to their organizations. In 2002 the Fraternity Pin Collector Society was forced to hold its annual conference in a secret location to protect themselves and their collection of more than 5,000 pins from the potential confiscation by hostile Greeks.

The purpose of this inquiry is not to create categories for classifying our possessions, but to sort out, and to "own up" to the relationships we have with the material objects. It was thought in the sixteenth century that collecting cabinets of curious objects could demonstrate the correctness of the existing world order and create a mirror of the universe. In the 21st century, abstracting, manipulating, and controlling what we own reflects human behavior, rather than proof of correctness or universal truths about the world or our objects.

Susan Kingsley is an artist and metalsmith in Carmel, California.

1 Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (London and New York: Verso Books, 1996), p. 68.
2 Jean Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting," in Elsner, John and Cardinal, Roger, ed. *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1994), p. 8.
3 Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, p. 87.
4 Ibid., 87.
5 Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 151.
6 John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, ed., *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1994), p. 3.
7 James Clifford, "On Collecting Art and Culture," in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 217.
8 Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, p. 86.
9 Elsner and Cardinal, p. 3.
10 Stewart, p. 162.
11 Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, p. 76.
12 Stewart, p. 165.
13 Ibid., 136.
14 Ibid., 133.
15 Ibid., 123.
16 See William Pietz. "The Problem of the Fetish." Parts I, II and IIIa. *Res 9*. (Spring 1985): 5-17; *Res 13* (Spring 1987): 23-45; *Res 16* (Autumn 1988): 105-123.
17 Ibid., Part I, 7.
18 Ibid., Part IIIa, 109.
19 Emily Apter, "Specularity and Reproduction: Marx, Freud, Baudrillard," in *Fetish, The Princeton Architectural Journal*, 23.
20 Katherine Rosman, "O Brother (and Sister), Where Art Thy Pins?," *New York Times*, August 11, 2002.

Klaus Bürgel's

Calculus of the Heart

by Patricia Harris and David Lyon

Mathematics is the mind's way of describing what the hands already know. Over a long career, Klaus Bürgel has demonstrated that his hands know a great deal, and in the last few years, he has honed a descriptive language of forms that intimates just how complex that knowledge is.

Euclid reasoned with shapes to reach the universal. Klaus Bürgel takes a similar approach to delve deeply into the nature of form. Whether he is working in jewelry, sculpture, or mixed-media collage, Bürgel's subject is always "seeing" into the nature of things. His jewelry and sculpture, especially in the last few years, have embraced abstraction wholeheartedly. Dissatisfied with Plato's flickering shadows, Bürgel creeps into the philosopher's cave to purloin the forms themselves.

In a respect, that places the artist in the noble lineage of abstract art and philosophy—the attempt to touch the infinite through pure expression, unhindered by social reference. As a mathematician reasons with numbers and formulae, Bürgel reasons with metal, working out concepts in direct forms rather than mere descriptions of forms. "I think of jewelry as model-making," he says. "It helps me clarify an idea. It creates a kind of muscle memory—if you live through an idea, it becomes part of you."

Bürgel's work has not always been so exclusively abstract. Throughout the 1990s, he concentrated on contrasting precious with non-precious materials—raw-looking gold with slices of tektite, real gold with gems of pyrite, or "fool's gold." The simplest of these forms, such as the group of pendants that he termed "Weights," appear at first glance to be found objects harnessed in a gold or silver setting so they can be suspended from a cord. Presenting them as jewelry gives totemic significance to what appear to be mineral gifts from the earth. Closer examination reveals that the rawness is artifice. They are highly worked objects that mimic natural forms.

"Weights" (pendants) 1997
18k gold, silver, tektite, pyrite, geode
diameter 5/8 – 2 1/8"

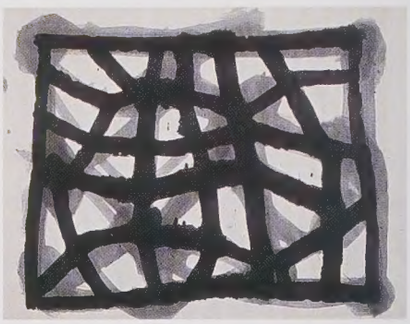
Heaven (necklace), 1997
18k gold, pearls
length 18"

Hell (necklace), 1997
18k gold, tektite
length 18"

clockwise from left
Untitled (brooch), 2002
18k gold, garnet, pyrite
2 1/2 x 1 1/8 x 5/8"

Untitled (drawing), 1999
ink on paper
20 7/8 x 15 3/4"

Untitled (ring), 2001
18k gold, sapphire
1 3/8 x 1 3/8 x 1 3/8"



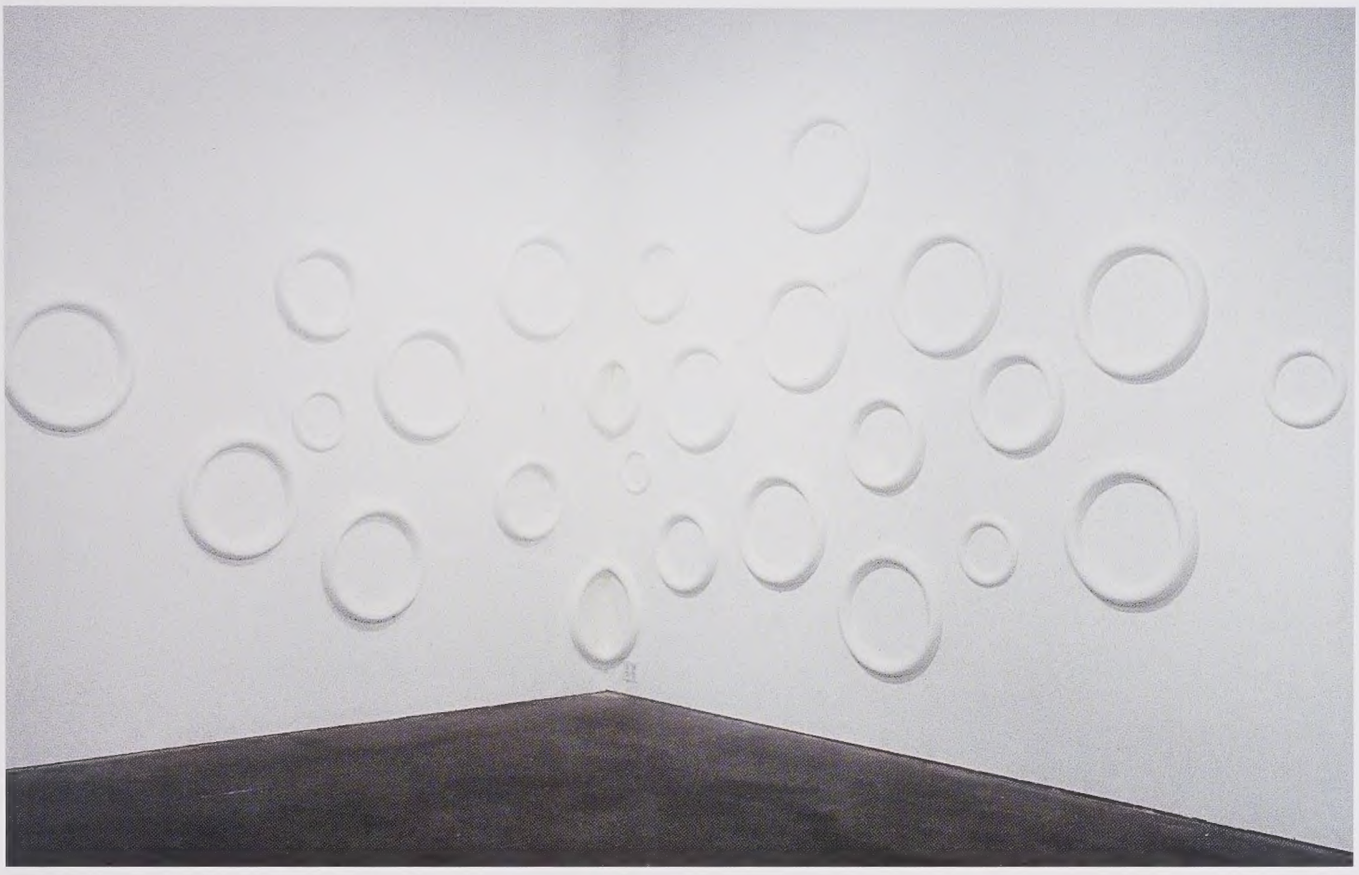
As one might expect of a metalsmith with his thorough European training, Bürgel has the skills to craft perfectly finished, highly polished pieces, but he often chooses to downplay this technical facility so that the materials can speak for themselves.

"The pieces address what's of value and what's not," he explains. "For example, I love pyrite. The intrinsic value of the material is only relevant because it makes people look at what's been done with it. I have used 18k and 24k gold. Some of my fetish pendants are cast iron and silver. I wouldn't exclude any material."

The weights and fetishes are part of a group from the late 1990s that Bürgel describes as his "Bavarian Voodoo" series—a reference to the folk belief in magic still prevalent in his native southern Germany, near the Swiss border. Yet the pieces are hermetically silent about meaning and reference. If Bürgel has a specific wearer in mind, he keeps mum about it. The talismanic works are stripped of all reference so their owner can make them his or her own magical object, vehicle of will, or vessel of spells.

"Hermetic" magic is all in the conjurer's mind, often as channeled through an object. Identifying this body of jewelry with Bavarian superstition suggests metaphysical properties that Bürgel does not intend. Even the names he gives a pair of necklaces from 1997—"Heaven" of pearls and gold, and "Hell" of gold and lumps of tektite—reflect more the lightness and brilliance of one versus the weightiness and darkness of the other than any religious significance. The act of naming, of course, is a movement toward meaning, but like any quantum observation, it traps the object.

By the late 1990s, Bürgel was already beginning to conceive of his work in suites rather than as individual objects, and his drawings and three-dimensional work were starting to converge. Complex, asymmetrical forms asserted themselves, often first in ink drawings on paper, then as jewelry compositions. Pen-and-ink drawings from the mid-1990s bear striking parallels to rings and brooches created just a few years later, as if a cycle of work were coming to fruition.



The allusion to natural objects plays against the obvious evidence of human construction, most notably in Bürgel's calculated departure from organic forms.

Bürgel was ready for a break, and made a seemingly radical departure in the late 1990s when he began to focus on large-scale sculpture. In a 1999 show at the California College of the Arts, he presented viewers with a wall relief installation of raised circles of varying sizes, titled *Flow*. Since they were in low relief and were painted the same color as the gallery walls, the composition could almost be read as a two-dimensional presentation—except that Bürgel confined the relief to a corner of the room. "Flow" was a harbinger of things to come.

Plane Geometry

Some of Bürgel's "Bavarian Voodoo" pieces used geodes as gemstones, and clearly the natural forms captivated him. Around 1999, he began constructing both jewelry and sculpture that resembled natural geodes but were, in fact, irregular polyhedrons with faces of three to five sides. Constructed in sheet gold, the 1999 pendant *Navel* is a technical tour de force. As the name suggests, the convex object is penetrated by a multi-faceted concavity.

Bürgel also created sculptures resembling massive plywood geodes nearly eight feet tall. Increasing the number of polygon faces to as many as six, he began to create an illusion of motion on a geological time scale—a suggestion that the process of crystallization is a form of prescribed dance. Just as he deliberately avoided a polished surface on some of his jewelry, Bürgel kept the angles raw and asymmetrical, mocking the perfection of the Platonic solids that the philosopher conjectured were the basic building blocks of the visible world.

Bürgel derived great satisfaction from constructing the plywood sculptures. "Geodesic structures are like a cocoon. I loved building huts when I was a kid," he says. His interest in vernacular architecture led him to extend some of the forms. "In New England, houses grow as a family grows."

The dramatic tension in the geode pieces derives from two very different oppositions. The allusion to natural objects plays against the obvious evidence of human construction, most

Flow, 1998
Installation view, California College of the Arts
styrofoam, plaster, paint
24 1/2 x 10'

The bristle of crystals found inside a geode may seem chaotic and irregular, but never is it as capricious as the spikes and angles of Bürgel's constructions.

notably in Bürgel's calculated departure from organic forms. The bristle of crystals found inside a geode may seem chaotic and irregular, but never is it as capricious as the spikes and angles of Bürgel's constructions.

The other tension is subtler. Whether large or small, each piece seems to blossom from a visual or compositional center. It also has a center of mass that does not coincide with the visual center. Set into motion, these pieces would tumble in apparent visual chaos. The tension between visual center and center of mass is only one of potential, of course, but it points up Bürgel's embrace of asymmetry to disrupt the viewer's expectations.

The potential for implied motion underlies a great deal of the artist's recent work. "It hit me that the geodesic pieces are three-dimensional dot-to-dot drawings," he says. "So I thought, what if I developed a curve? Instead of enclosing a space, I could describe one. It would be more a floating line with a tremendous dynamic—it can gain speed, slow down, turn a corner."

*Navel (*pendant), 1999
18k gold, nylon string
2 x 1 3/4 x 1 3/8"

Hello, Leibnitz

In terms of mathematical history, Bürgel's fascination with curves was a jump of two millennia from the plane geometry of Euclid to the calculus developed by Gottfried Liebnitz in the late seventeenth century. It's not that curves were new in Bürgel's work; there's always been a rounded quality to his jewelry. Even as he was finishing up with the "Bavarian Voodoo" pieces, he was constructing brooches and rings of a network of wire and gemstones. But these pieces owed much of their geometry to the geodes. They employed plane geometry, their geodesic forms only approximating smooth-surfaced solids.

In 2004, Bürgel began making a series of what he calls "loop brooches." He could have wrought their forms from wire stock, but chose instead to fabricate the pieces by perfectly matching two sides of metal bands to construct hollow forms that grow wider at their most acute angles, then thin as they shoot out along a trajectory to the next tight bend. A few are simple, others dizzyingly complex. "I thought to call them Roller

Coaster," says Bürgel, "because they are like that, but with no beginning or end. You can enter them at any point, let the eye wander and complete the loop for as long as you are interested. That's the drama: you would like to have a beginning and an end, but they contain the idea of infinity."

Within the purely abstract forms, he also manages to encapsulate a distilled emotional intensity. Bürgel leaves the surfaces unpolished, contrasting marks of the exacting labor of the artist with the pure vectors of the lines. "I am a jeweler. I don't want to deny my skills, but keep it simple," he says. "As a skilled craftsman, you have choices, and sometimes the best choice is not to make it perfect."

The brooches read as a calculus of trajectories with all the notations present, not just the final, elegant equation. The pieces are still, each self-contained, but their lines are so animated that they appear in constant motion—always tending toward some boundary or goal, then turning back and trying from another angle. Just as mathematical calculus is characterized by the use of infinite processes, approximating a limit, so too the lines of the loop brooches encapsulate the notion of tending toward, or approaching, an ultimate value.

Considered as a discrete object, each brooch also pits visual center against center of mass, much like Bürgel's geode sculptures. The center of mass is almost inevitably in thin air; the complex, looping orbits occur around a center that is static to the vanishing point. This gives the brooches an ethereal buoyancy that belies the nature of the metal itself. The interplay between the loops and curves and the center of mass is the calculus of dance. Indeed, Bürgel finds that dancers respond very strongly to the loop brooches, likening their movement to tai chi. They could as easily be seen as metallic equivalents of the contrails left by jet airplanes at high altitude.

The sheer grace of the loop brooches makes them look effortless, belying the long hours at the bench necessary to craft each one. "In all my work, an intensity is what comes out at the end—an intense laboring," Bürgel admits. "It's persistence more than patience. It's a painful passion to me."

Geodes, 1999-2000
plywood
approximate height 66"

Walking the Planck

Bürgel prefers to maintain separate studios for his sculpture and jewelry, but the ideas flow back and forth. Last year, concurrent with the loop brooches, he created a large installation piece for the Rosenberg Gallery at Goucher College in Maryland called *Kudzu*. The relief sculpture articulates complex curves massed roughly in a five-to-two horizontal to vertical ratio, so it reads as a panoramic abstract landscape. As with the roller-coaster effect of the loop brooches, the eye becomes lost trying to trace the trajectories.

the geodes, his recent sculptural installations are wall reliefs that might as well be drawings. The brooches, he points out, cling to the body, as if they need that fabric background to anchor them. Even the loop brooches, with their fanciful lines, are best seen from a single perspective. Given that quasi-three-dimensional approach, he wonders if the pieces are accurately reflected in the isolation of the gallery case or photographed against a white background.

His drawings take the unusual twist of layering imagery, superimposing abstract forms over images he has appropriated from magazines. At the same time, he has been experimenting with photographing his jewelry on different fabric backgrounds, or even against a windowpane so that the scene outside becomes part of the work.

Context has always challenged Bürgel. He talks passionately about his work as a mirror, as his way of trying to explain things to himself, a distillation of emotion. But when a piece of jewelry is completed, he feels he needs to banish all autobiographical reference. "Personally, I would feel very awkward living with someone else's history," he says.

"I feel like letting more life back into my work," Bürgel says. "Minimalism was a way of excluding it. Now I'm becoming interested in the concept of layering."

The sculpture may be the culmination, for now, of his work with curves. He feels that he is ready to move in another direction. "German training is geared to developing a style attached to a person," he says. It parallels the concept in other creative arts—music and literature, in particular—of developing a signature "voice." But Bürgel enjoys the New World freedom of striking out for the territory. "It took me years to understand that the mind is not something where you can squeeze everything through a funnel to fit a mold," he laughs.

As he grapples with issues of context for his work, Bürgel finds himself looking at contemporary sculpture. He is an admirer of the American sculptor-installation artist Mike Kelley, whose works tend to focus on reconceptualizing found objects into assemblages in which they admit new meaning.

"I feel like letting more life back into my work," Bürgel says. "Minimalism was a way of excluding it. Now I'm becoming interested in the concept of layering. Life is a conglomerate of all kinds of things. The idea is to create work that is open enough to interact with the world."

Bürgel is the first to note that his sculpture and jewelry have tended to cling to a world of two dimensions. Apart from

"I have to strive to make the work open enough that people can identify themselves in it. I don't claim to be a conceptual artist," Bürgel hastens to add. "But I would like to find a way to incorporate into my jewelry the fabric it is worn against and the personality of the wearer."

"Life is very complicated." ◘

Patricia Harris and **David Lyon** are journalists and critics based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Loop VIII (brooch), 2005
sterling silver
3 1/8 x 2"

Loop 1 (brooch), 2004
sterling silver
4 x 3 1/2"

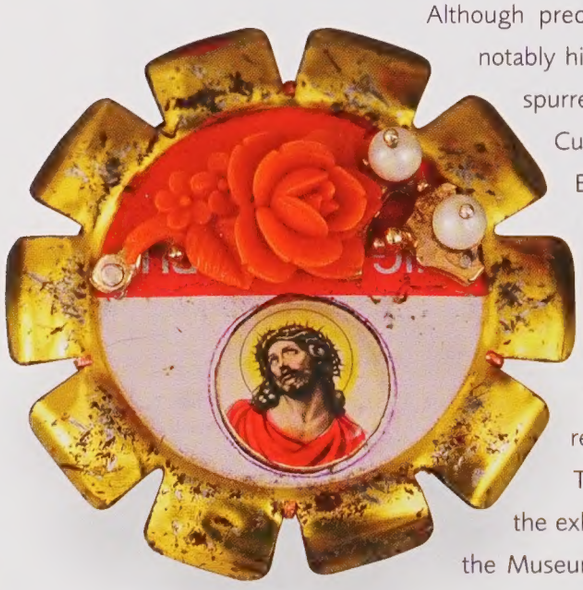
Kudzu, 2006
Installation view, Rosenberg Gallery, Goucher College
25 x 9'

Robert Ebendorf's

Pilgrimage to Paradox

by Glen R. Brown

A tondo portrait of a wistful Christ rides precariously on a camel's hump. A silvery crucifix floats on a crumpled metallic sea of text. An implicit Virgin Mary, oddly evocative of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus,* rises in demure efflorescence from the hollow of a broken crab claw. In these peculiar images, drawn from Robert Ebendorf's newest series of pins, the religious medallion as found object inhabits compositions that recall the strange metamorphoses, mystical affinities, and apparent non sequiturs of medieval marginalia. Like those curious manuscript illuminations, unfurling on vellum borders in playful, even irreverent, opposition to the gravity of the adjacent text, Ebendorf's images assert the impossibility of exact correspondence between the world and the Word, and concede that faith must often embrace paradox. From this perspective, the absurd is revelatory precisely because of its resistance to exegesis; a resistance that Ebendorf has long exploited, although perhaps never more provocatively than in this newest work.



Flowers in Heaven: Badge, 2006
found tin, pearls, found button, plastic flowers
diameter 2"

Although precedents exist for Ebendorf's recontextualization of religious medallions—most notably his 1993 series of works titled "Necklace/Cross"—his return to this endeavor was spurred by an invitation to participate in a thematic exhibition on badges or medallions. Currently a professor in the School of Art and Design at East Carolina University, Ebendorf recently received the honor of a three-year simultaneous appointment as visiting Professor at the University of West England's Bristol School of Art, Media and Design. Enamel expert Elizabeth Turrell at the Bristol School was planning an international exhibition slotted for late 2007, and invited more than 20 artists, including Ebendorf, to create pieces for the occasion. Subsequent conversations between the two fueled his interest in developing the new series of found-object religious badges.

The idea of creating badges as opposed to medallions was a direct consequence of the exhibition's parameters. Jointly undertaken by Turrell and Juergen Boenig, curator at the Museum der Arbeit in Hamburg, the exhibition asks artists from Germany, the United

Jesus is Number 1: Badge, 2006
aluminum can, church medallion,
silver, copper
diameter 2"

Kingdom, and the United States to respond to the varied array of enamel badges produced over much of the twentieth century by Hamburg manufacturer Metallwaren Fabrik Carl Wild. Prompted by the heraldic devices, society insignia, martial symbols, and factory logos depicted on their products, Ebendorf began to consider the possibilities for a series of emblematic badges of a somewhat different stamp. Although incorporating religious medallions into brooch-sized badges was only one of his pursuits, it was arguably the most provocative.

A few years earlier Ebendorf had begun to reduce his brooches to a size more appropriate to the lapel pin, a form rarely exploited for masculine jewelry today. Ebendorf speculated on the possibility of an emerging fashion trend of men purchasing and wearing art jewelry. This practice—which he first noticed several years ago on male guests at a James Renwick Alliance function—struck him as curiously consistent with the tradition of badge conferral in initiation rites. Although of artistic value, the pins seemed intended not simply as adornment but rather confirmation of group affiliation. A certain rivalry had even developed between collectors, imparting a competitive dimension to the acquisition of lapel pins made by well-known artists. In this context, the pins became badges of honor in a test of connoisseurship and investment acumen.

Although badges frequently serve as symbols of authority,

Recycled Saints: Badge, 2006
crushed paper, tin, silver, copper
diameter 2 1/4"

Ebendorf was more intrigued by their capacity to represent membership in a group or to acknowledge personal achievement. His interest in found-object religious medallions led him to reflect on these applications of the badge in the contemporary Christian context. His initial thoughts were of pins designed to commemorate church conventions or reward years of perfect attendance in parochial schools. Ultimately, the badges that he produced for the exhibition—whose circular shapes echo the prevalent format of the Carl Wild designs—are far more ambiguous. For example, the large red numeral in *Jesus is Number 1: Badge* naturally suggests the inscription on a first-prize medal: an obvious token of achievement. The crucifix that overlaps the numeral, however, draws the badge more compellingly into the realm of the WWJD bracelet and other similar objects designed to profess the wearer's religious or moral allegiance. Public declaration of spiritual convictions—especially in the present age of global fracturing along religious lines—has clearly become akin to party affiliation, and *Jesus is Number 1* might in this sense be interpreted as an abstruse version of the campaign button.

This would, however, be a superficial assessment of what is in fact a complicated and impenetrable object. The simple laudatory implications of *Jesus is Number 1* falter the moment the viewer perceives that the text has been cut from a beer can. Is this after all a bit of mockery, intended to court the kind of scandal that surrounded Andrés Serrano's notorious plunging of a crucifix in urine? Perhaps, but there is nothing in Ebendorf's previous work to support such a suspicion. Could *Jesus is Number 1* be a modern temperance medal, a revisiting of those Victorian commendations for triumph over drink that often bore evangelical mottos such as "Heaven's Light Our Guide"? Possibly, but Ebendorf is rarely so literal in his references. Could the badge instead be a reflection on the paradox of the incarnation: like the German Expressionist Emil Nolde's *Last Supper,* which mercilessly depicts Jesus as a sallow-faced tippler among a lowly band of outcasts?

Semantic subtlety has long been a distinguishing trait of Ebendorf's assemblages, and he has consciously refrained from dealing in overtly polemical subject matter. One is probably safe in assuming that the confrontation between crucifix and beer can in *Jesus is Number 1* is tendentiously inexplicable, a deliberate attempt to nurture what the Surrealist René Magritte described as "the inherent poetry and mystery of the image." Even when Ebendorf's works seem ostensible one-liners or visual puns, their ultimate effect is of enigma. In the puzzling *Don't Drink and Drive: Badge,* a medallion of St. Christopher has been tightly wedged within the rim of a crushed Budweiser can. Inspired partly by the protective medallions that dangle from rearview mirrors, the piece implicitly wards off the curse of drunken drivers, or, more subtly, one's own vices and poor decisions: "St. Christopher protect us...from ourselves."

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The meanings that found objects acquire as they cross the border between life and art can never fully eclipse the traces of those objects' former existence. Like the trailing strings of a marionette, these remnants can be means of manipulating the object and compelling it to perform on its new stage. In the case of *Don't Drink and Drive,* one is perfectly justified in invoking hagiography as a method for making sense of the curious embrace of medallion and metal can. The thirteenth-century Golden Legend relates that St. Christopher, who vowed to serve only a master fiercer and more resolute than himself, renounced his former allegiance to the devil in favor of a life on the path of Christ. What better metaphor for a triumph over addiction through courage and

Don't Drink and Drive: Badge, 2006
crushed Budweiser beer can, St. Christopher medallion, copper
diameter 2 1/4"

strength of will? Is it only coincidental that Hieronymus Bosch, in his famous *St. Anthony Carrying the Christ Child*, symbolized the evils of the world through a broken stoneware *Jacobakanne*, the beer can of the sixteenth century? While there is no confirmation of Ebendorf's intent to moralize along these lines, it is in the nature of found-object assemblages to yield themselves up to external codes such as the symbolism of saints.

Although an artist can never fully administer the meanings of objects, the particulars of his or her biography and *oeuvre* can construct a partial framework for interpretation. This is the case with Ebendorf's enigmatic *Virgin of the Crab: Badge*, which departs in composition from the circular format of the majority of his recent found-object religious badges. Crab claws, like squirrel paws, are Ebendorf leitmotifs, souvenirs of a period of suffering and soul-searching punctuated by wanderings along lonely roads and beaches, amid the evidence of life's fragility and brevity. The *Virgin of the Crab* could for this reason be perceived as a modern counterpart of the late-medieval pilgrim badge, a pewter emblem sewn prominently on one's hat or clothing in commemoration of the wearer's arduous journey for enlightenment and salvation. Ebendorf's crab claw is, incidentally, reminiscent of the medieval scallop badge, which symbolized the popular pilgrimage to Santiago de Campostela in Spain, ever since the earliest travelers began collecting seashells along the coast as souvenirs of their holy visit to the shrine of St. James.

Despite its mandorla of broken glass tesserae, modish spiraled-triangle pediment, and, above all, odd pairing of crab pincer and vaguely Disneyesque Madonna, the *Virgin of the Crab* badge is a strangely transcendent work which encapsulates a centuries-old tradition of art in the service of spirit. Its imagery evokes fleeting reminiscence of jewel-encrusted reliquaries in scented darkness, footsteps ringing on ancient stone, and curling wisps of censer smoke. In *Recycled Saints: Badge*, another recent piece that unleashes such unlikely trains of thought, a found medallion of the Madonna and Child rests within the stunningly beautiful crushed walls of a discarded snuff can. If the piece began as a whimsical play on the idea of "chewing on religion," it ended as an aureate emblem of Byzantine-like mysticism. Within its furling cardboard frame, brown and brittle as the linen of the tomb, the gold medallion imparts a radiant promise of hope to the abject. Its ecclesiastical imagery no doubt contributes significantly to the refinement of this effect, but the general metaphor of a precious object secretly ensconced in debased material would persist even if the spiritual implications of the piece were dispelled.

The quality of an eternal quest—a groping for answers to the key questions in life that encounters in things not finality but only the fugitive nature of the palimpsest—has been a main feature of Ebendorf's assemblages from the start.

This, of course, begs the question: To what degree are Ebendorf's recent badges merely enquiries into the sentiments invested in the religious medallion and the curious manner in which those emotions seem to linger in the object after its separation from a pious owner? Some of his pins, such as the droll *I'd Walk a Mile for Jesus: Badge* with its tacit message of Christian zeal, suggest commentary on dependency—religion as nicotine—and reflection on the pop aspects of contemporary faith that might render ecclesiastic medallions the equivalents

Virgin of the Crab: Badge, 2006
silver, crushed glass, turquoise, crab claw
2 1/2 x 1"

From Out of the Darkness: Badge, 2006
silver, copper, gold plate crucifix
diameter 2 1/4"

I'd Walk a Mile for Jesus: Badge, 2006
crushed can, painted tin, found button
diameter 2"

of "Just do it" T-shirts. Other badges cannot be so easily interpreted as social commentary or mere investigation of fetishes for their strange psychological gravity. Among Ebendorf's recent work, the *From Out of the Darkness: Badge* quietly asserts itself as a clue to a more profound introspection. Consisting of a worn gold crucifix centered on a circular field of oxidized silver fraught with hesitant scratches, the piece recalls Rembrandt's powerful etching *The Three Crosses*, which speaks volumes about the perpetual struggles of faith through a mesh of searching lines.

The quality of an eternal quest—a groping for answers to the key questions in life that encounters in things not finality but only the fugitive nature of the palimpsest—has been a main feature of Ebendorf's assemblages from the start. The objects of his attention have always been selected from among the detritus of the world for their sense of connection to intangible circumstances that will forever escape their new settings. In this respect, Ebendorf's recent badges are merely the foam on the crest of the wave. Like his earlier found-object jewelry, the badges lay no claims to answers but, on the contrary, seem to enshrine the questions that drive the quest. Like badges of a pilgrimage to paradox, they seem to celebrate an unending journey toward impenetrable mystery.

Glen R. Brown is professor of art history at Kansas State University.

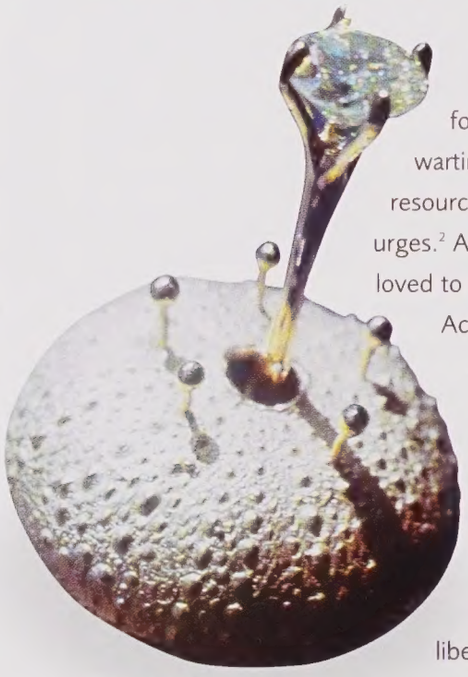
This article has been funded by Helen W. Drutt English in support of research that will expand historical documentation in our field, and in appreciation for the recognition bestowed upon her in receiving the 2000 Honorary Member Award from the Society of North American Goldsmiths.

Svetozar and Ruth Radakovich

Love in Three Dimensions

by Toni Greenbaum

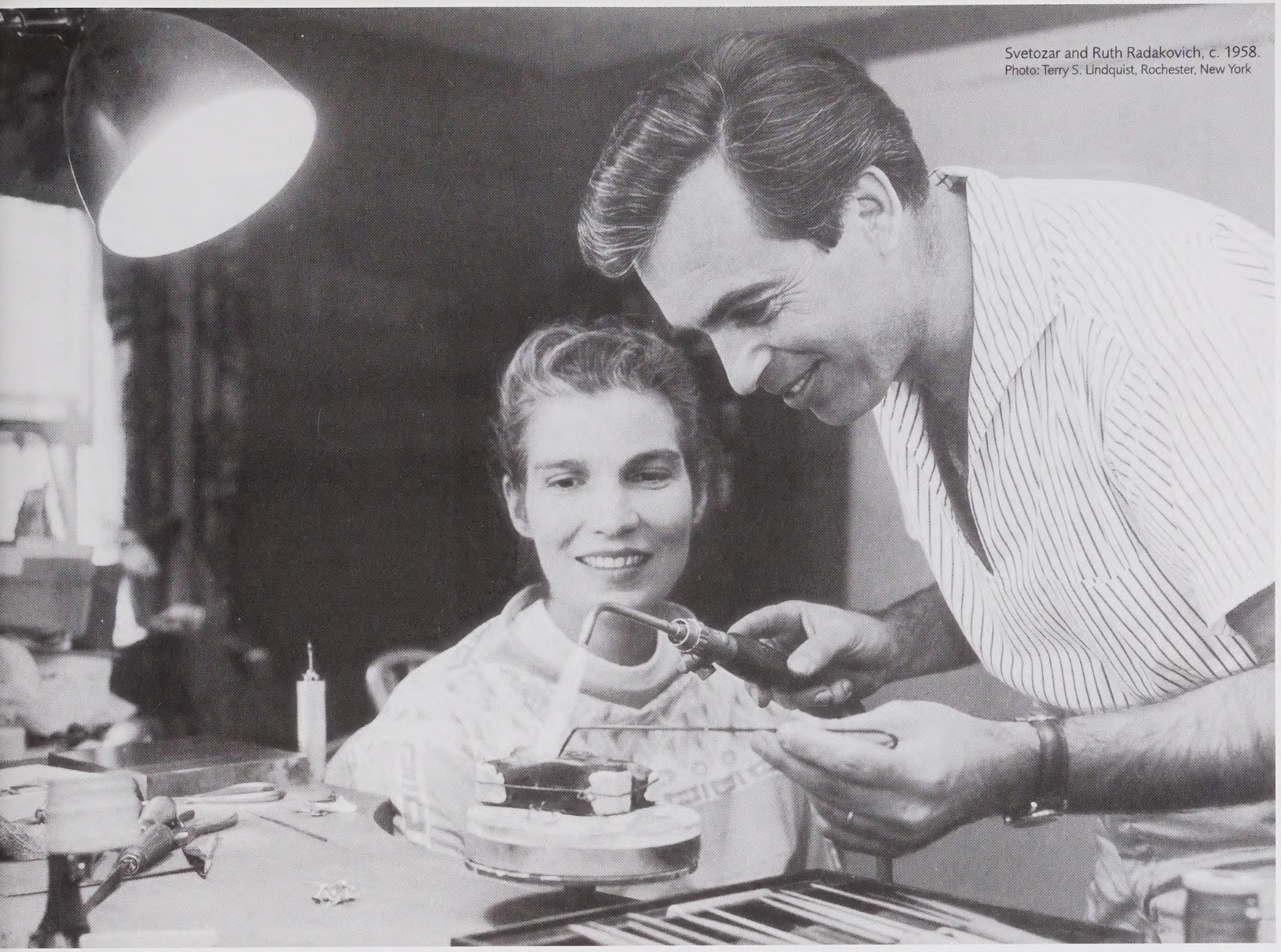
Married "design couples" became somewhat of a convention during the mid-twentieth century, particularly in California, where Charles and Ray Eames undoubtedly achieved the greatest fame. Others of note included Jackson and Ellamarie Woolley, Arthur and Jean Ames, and Svetozar and Ruth Radakovich. The nature of each pair's private relationship, plus the degree to which they collaborated, or worked alone, varies, as does the credit given to each. The Radakoviches—jewelers, sculptors, and architectural detailers—performed comparably, albeit independently, and were accorded equal prominence. Although Toza, as he was called, created more work, Ruth produced a stunning amount, considering her additional roles as wife, mother, hostess, and business manager. An intrepid individual, Ruth was also responsible for getting Toza out of Europe, following World War II. Together they were personally devoted, politically heroic, technically astute, and aesthetically alluring.



Ruth Clark Radakovich
Cocktail Ring, 1969
14k gold, titanium, rutile, cubic zirconium
2 3/4 x 1 5/8 x 1 5/8"
Collection Museum of Arts & Design, New York.

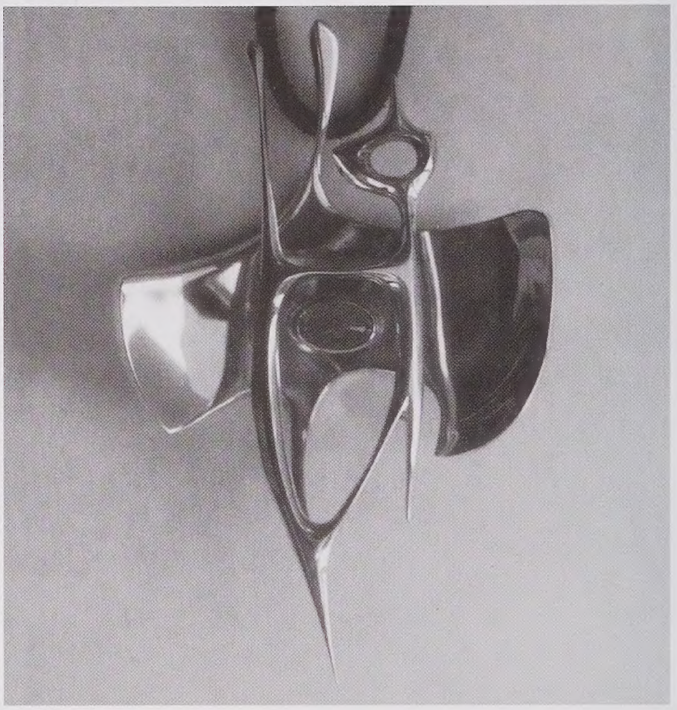
Toza

Like fellow Eastern European designer Eva Ziesel, who was wrongfully imprisoned in 1936 for conspiring to assassinate Joseph Stalin, Toza had an early life that reads like a heady wartime novel.[1] Born March 27, 1918, in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, Toza benefited from a strong and resourceful mother, who taught her curious son to cook and sew, and encouraged his creative urges.[2] A well-rounded teenager, Toza became a national swimming and skiing champion, but also loved to work with his hands and investigate how things were assembled. He attended the Royal Academy of Art in Belgrade, from which he received a Bachelor of Arts in 1938 and Master of Arts one year later. Soon after, Toza enlisted in the Yugoslav army, in order to serve the two month stint mandatory for civilian employment; but in April 1941 Yugoslavia was attacked by Nazi Germany, and Toza was captured and sent to a POW camp outside Belgrade. This imprisonment led to a dizzying drama of repeated escapes and incarcerations, hiding out, conscription in the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army (a partisan faction formed by the Soviets after the Russian advance on Belgrade), near starvation, illness, and nightmares that would haunt him the rest of his life. A country in ruins, Yugoslavia was liberated from the Nazis in 1944–45, only to be ensnared by the Communists.



Svetozar and Ruth Radakovich, c. 1958.
Photo: Terry S. Lindquist, Rochester, New York

Svetozar Radakovich
Ring, 1972
14k and 18k gold



Ruth

The daughter of a well-to-do physician, Ruth Clark was born in Winnetka, Illinois, on April 25, 1920. She attended Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York, from around 1938 to 1940, but transferred to University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she studied art and anthropology, presumably receiving a Bachelor of Arts in 1943.[3] Shortly thereafter she engaged in various war-related activities that included work at a Ford bomber factory in Detroit, perhaps through some involvement with the Air Force branch of the Women's Army Corps (WACS).[4] A humanitarian, Ruth not only organized charitable donations for World War II orphans in Yugoslavia, a country she felt was particularly devastated by the war, but volunteered to go there in 1946 with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA). The same year Toza got a job in the art department of the UNRRA, where the two met, and, although they did not speak a common language, fell in love. When Ruth tried to prompt Toza's immigration to the United States the following year, she was expelled from Yugoslavia.

After the UNRRA disbanded in 1947, Toza began working in the art department of *Jugoslavia*, a prestigious quarterly magazine, which was distributed around the world in several languages. He loved the assignments, especially those that allowed him to illustrate architectural detailing, sculpture, and wood carvings. Ruth, meanwhile, furthered her education, spending the summer of 1948 taking courses in metalwork and enameling with Carlton Ball at Mills College in Oakland, California. In 1950 she studied ceramics at School for American Craftsmen (SAC), then located at Alfred University, Alfred, New York.[5] She entered the metals program at SAC in1951, soon after its relocation to Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Rochester, New York, where she worked under the tutelage of esteemed silversmith John Prip, who, along with his wife, Karen, would become life-long friends.

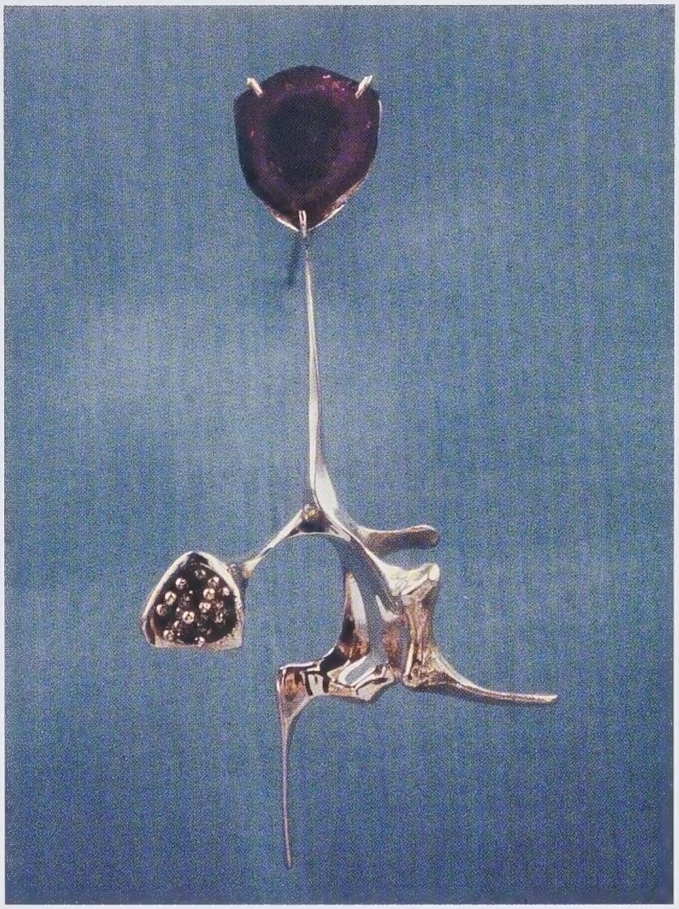
The relationship between Ruth and Toza became increasingly serious, via letters and her generous contributions to his beleaguered family. Toza maintained a private studio, where he painted pictures that were exhibited in local art shows, and continued his job at the magazine, becoming de facto art editor after the presiding editor's death (he could not formally assume the title since he refused to join the Communist Party, a cruel irony that would complicate his later attempts to immigrate to America). In August 1951, after Yugoslavia's independent Communist government began allowing visitors, Ruth returned, determined to obtain Toza's freedom even through bribery, if necessary. She did not succeed, and was again deported, fleeing to Paris and then Rome from where she continued to plan his release, or, failing that, his escape. Fearing political scrutiny, the couple communicated through tiny notes embedded within vitamin capsules and secret messages covered over with paintings, able to be revealed after the surface was removed. They devised a scheme whereby Ruth

Ruth Clark Radakovich
Pin, 1957
18k yellow gold, Nevada turquoise
4 x 3 1/2"
Collection Museum of Arts & Design, New York

Svetozar Radakovich
Pendant, c. 1957
sterling silver, blue onyx

sent Toza a small boat, piece by piece, hidden in "care packages" that were meant to be reassembled and used to travel across the Adriatic to Bari, on the southeast coast of Italy, where Ruth would be waiting. Alas, Toza was caught mid-ocean and arrested, suspected of partaking in an anti-Communist conspiracy. Inexplicably, however, Toza was released after six months, and, in 1953, granted a visa to visit France as *Jugoslavia* magazine's art editor. He was reunited with Ruth, and they began life together, trying numerous times to obtain Toza's admittance into the United States; they were routinely denied because, as a Yugoslav national, he was erroneously assumed to be a Communist.

Toza's introduction to jewelry making was fortuitous. Since they could no longer remain in Paris due to restrictive visa regulations, and Denmark was the only country willing to take Toza as a refugee, the couple went to Copenhagen, where they signed up for a five-week course in jewelry casting with Mogens Bjørn Andersen, a prominent Danish jeweler. They also met Hans Christensen, the Danish metalsmith with whom Toza would soon study at RIT. Toza demonstrated a distinct aptitude for the skill. Although he painted abstract nautical scenes and still-lifes, even securing a few local exhibitions, Toza was supporting himself and Ruth with odd jobs and house painting; he realized jewelrymaking might be a viable career. Suddenly they were recalled to Paris by the American embassy, which had unexpectedly reversed its decision and would allow Toza entry into the United States. Ruth and Toza were married in Paris on January 6, 1954, with the bride wearing a dress handmade by the groom, who was at last permitted to apply for American citizenship. Having finally conquered the machinations of international intrigue and Cold War politics, the couple booked passage on the ocean liner Normandie, which had a long waiting list. They decided to spend the interim traveling through Europe, picking up additional metalsmithing techniques along the way, such as the ancient art of filigree in Toledo, Spain.



Fearing political scrutiny, the couple communicated through tiny notes embedded within vitamin capsules and secret messages covered over with paintings...

Rochester

The Radakoviches sailed into New York Harbor in February 1955. Ruth had suspended her metals training at RIT to be with Toza, and was eager to return. She took him to Rochester, then a locus for the expansive craft revival due not only to RIT and SAC, but also the Memorial Art Gallery at University of Rochester, which organized crafts as well as painting and sculpture exhibitions. Toza was enthralled with the "quaint" atmosphere, along with the practical aspects, of RIT. "I always had the urge to do something with my hands..., so I thought I'd do some kind of craft for a living....We both studied metalworking so we would need only one set of equipment."[6] Due to his broad fine arts background, Toza was hired to teach design at SAC, and, a year later, drawing and painting at RIT. Ruth contributed by teaching metalwork at the Memorial Art Gallery, where Toza would eventually teach as well.

The Scandinavian idiom was palpable during this period, particularly at RIT, resulting from the presence of Hans Christensen and John Prip, both Danish-trained metalsmiths: their consequent impact upon American jewelry, holloware, and flatware cannot be overstated. Christensen, whom Toza and Ruth had met in Copenhagen when he was foreman of the

Ruth Clark Radakovich
Pin, c. 1958
18k yellow gold, tourmaline
Collection Jeanie Radakovich, Encinitas, California

model-making shop at the venerable Georg Jensen Company, became head of the metalsmithing program at SAC in 1954.[7] He succeeded Prip, an American of Danish descent, who had apprenticed with Evald Nielsen in Copenhagen from 1937 to 1942, and was leaving SAC to pursue a career as an independent silversmith. Toza learned quickly; therefore studied with Christensen for only three months, long enough to complete a replica of his mother's Greek coffeepot by hammering silver sheet around maple wood stakes (a feat so impressive for a neophyte that SAC metalsmith Michael Jerry remembers it to this day).[8] As with everything else in life, Toza's approach to metalsmithing was gutsy and direct. While musing about whether it was preferable for a craftsperson to be educated first as a fine artist/designer or in the so-called crafts, he opted for the former, attributing invention and boldness to lack of technical knowledge that allowed a certain naive freedom within the chosen medium.[9]

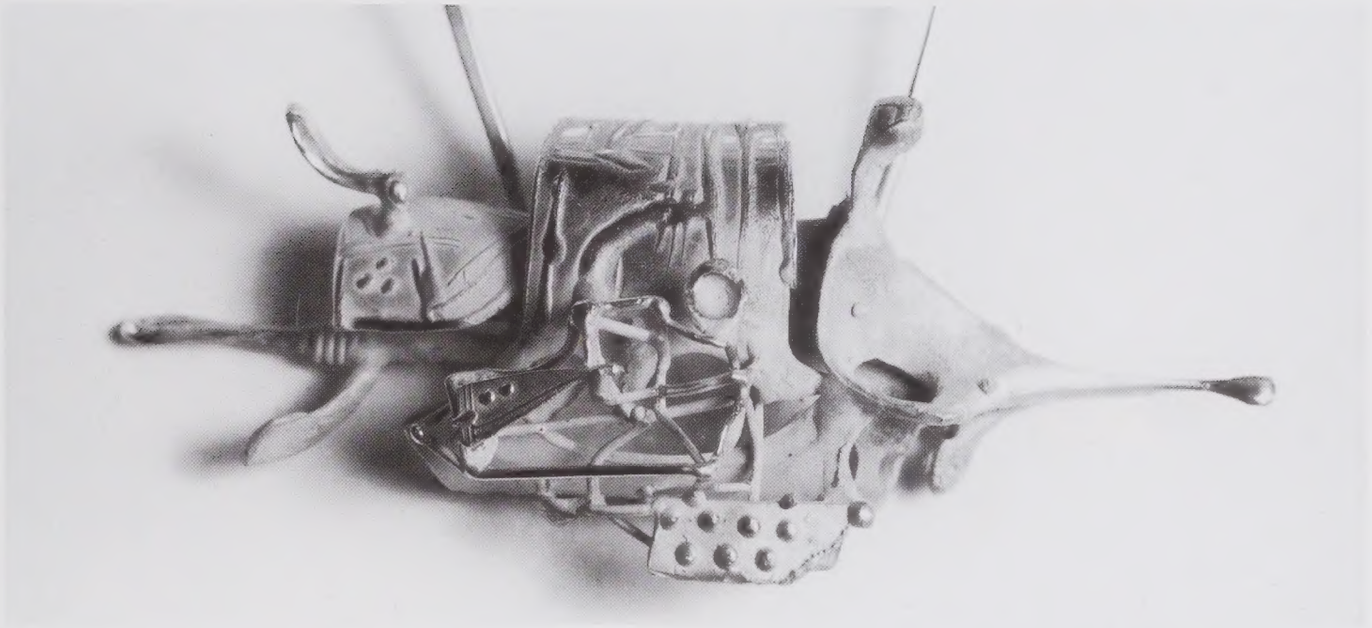
Stylistically, both Toza's and Ruth's efforts were consistent with American studio jewelry from the mid- to late 1950s, mainly that of other Rochester metalsmiths such as Ronald Hayes Pearson and Jerry. Guiding them was a Danish modern aesthetic with roots in the organic biomorphism of Henning Koppel, one of Georg Jensen's foremost post-war designers.[10] Toza's endeavors, however, were more complex than the others'—layered structures often suggesting natural forms, chiefly sea creatures—akin to pieces by Cleveland goldsmith John Paul Miller and Minneapolis jeweler Christian Schmidt. Although much of the Radakoviches' jewelry was forged, casting played a paramount role in their process, as it did with many metalsmiths at the time.[11] Carvex, a new casting material, had become available in the early 1950s. It revolutionized the modeling process by remaining relatively hard, due to the presence of plastic resin, as opposed to wax, which softened too quickly to allow the precision undercutting vital to Toza's and Ruth's sculptural style. New Yorker Ed Wiener, a jeweler admired by the couple, also used Carvex with aplomb. There is a distinct similarity between some very early abstract figurative pendants of Toza's and those by Wiener, as well as those by Sam Kramer, another inspired New York jeweler.[12]

Ruth and Toza were immediate critical successes in Rochester. Toza won several awards for painting in exhibitions at the Memorial Art Gallery, in addition to two awards for jewelry: a purchase prize for a silver and moonstone necklace, and honorable mention for a silver and onyx pendant, at the "Second National Exhibition of Jewelry and Related Objects," sponsored by the Hickok Company of Rochester.[13] It was truly remarkable that pieces by one so new to the craft "...were singled out by the jury for special recognition because...there was a departure from the ordinary."[14] Ruth, on the other hand, won grand prize—the Hickok Award—for a gold and turquoise pin. This exceptional piece was even chosen to grace the cover of the February 1957 issue of *Craft Horizons* magazine, then the voice of the American Craft Movement. More honors and accolades followed. Both jewelers were represented by pieces in the United States Pavilion at the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels and included in the important double issue of *Design Quarterly* magazine in 1959, devoted to American jewelry. The Radakoviches' production was small, limited to one-of-a-kind works or a few examples of each design, unlike Pearson, for example, whose run was unlimited. They sold virtually everything through Shop One in Rochester, Nanny's in San Francisco, and various other regional galleries and craft outlets.[15]

Encinitas

By 1959 the Radakoviches had two daughters: three year-old Jean and one-year-old Saika. Although they loved Rochester, a warmer climate and the sea beckoned Toza. The family relocated to Encinitas, California, a small beach town 30 miles north of San Diego. They purchased a 1920s farmhouse in a ten-acre grove filled with lush vegetation, which Toza would transform with his own sculptural chimney, carved teak and pine doors (some with stained or blown glass inserts), and cast bronze door fittings. He also designed a detached L-shaped studio, characterized by a carved wooden center column that was so admired by fellow jeweler Arline Fisch, she adapted the idea for her own San Diego studio.[16] A multiple-use facility, the Radakoviches' workspace included a basement foundry for casting bronze sculptures, built under the guidance of James Hubbell, a notable local artist/craftsman, who also became a close friend.[17]

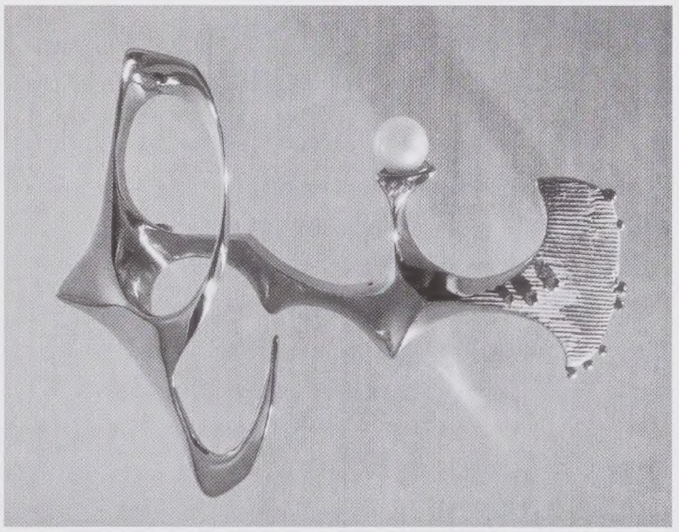
Both Ruth and Toza were well versed in modern art theory. Sculptors as well as jewelers, they each created complex bronze constructions reminiscent of Reg Butler, Kenneth Armitage, and Lynn Chatwick, and held distinct opinions regarding the relationship between the two art forms. Ruth's jewelry from the late 1950s recalls Henry Moore's late 1930s bronze reclining figures, as well as Basaldella Mirko's late 1940s work. The organic shape, conscious manipulation of negative space, and deep undercutting, seen in Toza's gold and pearl pin from



The result was flattering jewelry that also displayed extreme spatial volume, a hallmark of their distinctive styles.

c. 1958, is evident in Moore's work as well. Although intent upon making "sculptural jewelry," the Radakoviches, nevertheless, considered traits specific to adornment, such as viewers' angle of vision; frontal perspective for pins and pendants; scale; weight; balance; and attaching mechanisms. The result was flattering jewelry that also displayed extreme spatial volume, a hallmark of their distinctive styles. Characteristically, their facility in each medium informed the other. A bronze hanging sculpture by Toza from 1968 was directly inspired by an earlier cast gold necklace from 1962-63. In 1969, writer Marilyn Hagberg suggested that Toza's three fields of endeavor—painting, sculpture, and jewelry—led to a rearrangement of elements within a dimensional format that would have been unlikely if he were less versatile.[18]

Although Ruth and Toza worked side by side, often critiquing one another's output, they never collaborated. Ruth was slower and relied upon several rough drawings before executing in wax; while Toza, who thought volumetrically, realized his final designs instantly, whether on paper, with wax, or directly in metal. Much of their work was commissioned. Ruth was a gregarious, charismatic woman who loved to entertain. The couple regularly hosted parties and events in their home for local art-related organizations such as Allied Craftsmen of San Diego, with whom they exhibited regularly. Their friendships embraced diverse fields of interest and included scientist Jonas



Salk and mathematician Jacob Bronowski and their wives.

In 1961 Toza was invited to participate in the Southwest Indian Arts Program at University of Arizona, Tucson. The project, sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, paired a prominent Native American artist and an "Anglo" artist to co-teach their skills to talented Indian students. Toza was teamed with Charles Loloma, the brilliant modernist Hopi jeweler.[19] Loloma, who had studied ceramics at SAC in the mid-1940s (when it was located at Alfred University), was a groundbreaking artist who sought to meld his native heritage with the ideals of the American Craft Movement. Toza found spiritual comfort with this tribal "other," as well as with his niece

above
Svetozar Radakovich
Pin, c. 1958
14k gold, pearl

top
Svetozar Radakovich
Necklace, 1962-63
14k yellow gold

By the 1980s his work had become elegantly sophisticated, emphasizing pure forms, sleek lines and shiny, unadulterated silver surfaces...

and artistic heir, Verma Nequatewa, that led to a profound friendship lasting throughout their lives. Much of Toza's subsequent jewelry reflected Loloma's influence, most significantly his use of loaf-cut stones and hidden mosaics.

As the 1960s progressed, some of Toza's work, both in sculpture and jewelry, began to display attenuated figural groupings, the former on rocks or wooden bases and the latter on carved pebbles not unlike Moore's sculptures from the early 1950s. Ruth's jewelry became larger, the formats increasingly eccentric. Both were executing more architectural commissions. They experimented with plastics and fiberglass; a series of doors evolved from earlier wooden models into carved polyurethane foam coated in multiple layers of fiberglass, with cast plastic resin inserts in lieu of stained or blown glass. These doors resembled surfboards, and were, in fact, fabricated under the tutelage of San Diego's premier surfboard maker, Carl Eckburg.

During the course of their lengthy careers, the Radakoviches compiled an impressive national as well as international exhibition roster, highlighted by numerous group and one- and/or two-person shows throughout the United States, for example, at the Albright Art Gallery (now Albright-Knox Art Gallery), Buffalo, New York; Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe; and in California at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Long Beach Museum of Art, La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, and Pasadena Art Museum, where they were also represented over the years in several "California Design" shows.[2] "California Design 9," in 1965, included Radakovich jewelry, cast bronze door latches and pulls, a forged iron gate, and a 25-foot children's backyard play set of painted galvanized pipe, wood, and magnesite. The couple was included in exhibitions in Japan, and, in 1964, their jewelry, displayed in the "Form and Quality" section of the International Handcrafts and Trade Fair in Munich, Germany, was granted singular praise.[21] Toza received the Award of Honor from the American Institute of Architects in 1967. Both were represented by Lee Nordness Galleries in New York, which, in 1969, was responsible for amassing the definitive Johnson Collection of American Crafts that comprised the landmark traveling exhibition, "Objects: USA," in which the Radakoviches showed works in more mediums than any other makers, including bronze, fiberglass, stained glass, and jewelry.[22] Jewelry by both is in many fine public and private collections, including the Museum of Arts & Design, New York and

Svetozar Radakovich
Bracelet, 1975
gold, sterling silver, ivory, bone, ebony, turquoise, beach stone

Svetozar Radakovich
Bracelet, c. 1979
sterling silver, ivory, bone, gold, turquoise, lapis

Minnesota Museum of American Art, St. Paul; Toza is also represented by five pieces in The Daphne Farago Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Tragically, in 1974 Ruth was diagnosed with advanced ovarian cancer. She died a year later on her 21st wedding anniversary, at only 54 years of age. Toza's jewelry from the mid-late 1970s took on a kind of "baroque" quality, in keeping with much California jewelry of the period.[23] Pendants sometimes featured puppet-like fantasy figures with tribal accoutrements such as feathers; rings sported realistic human heads, based upon pre-Columbian prototypes. By the 1980s his work had become elegantly sophisticated, emphasizing pure forms, sleek lines and shiny, unadulterated silver surfaces; he occasionally added strong, simply cut stones such as turquoise or sometimes ivory. Toza continued to maintain a respectable exhibition schedule, culminating in his designation as a "Living Treasure of California" in 1985, until a series of debilitating strokes precluded his exacting methods. He died on July 22, 1998.

As major contributors to the design ethos of the latter mid-twentieth century continue to be evaluated, and the 1960s through 1980s are delved into with increasing fervor, Svetozar and Ruth Radakovich are certain to emerge as two of the most compelling artist/craftspeople of the period.

Toni Greenbaum is an art historian, specializing in twentieth- and twenty-first-century jewelry and metalwork.

Svetozar Radakovich
Door, c. 1968
polyurethane

1 See Ronald T. Labaco, "Eva Zeisel: 'My Century'," in *The International Art and Design Fair 1900-2006* (exh. cat. New York: The International Art and Design Fair Ltd, 2006): p. 17. According to Labaco, curator of this loan exhibition organized by The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, and displayed at The Seventh Regiment Armory, New York from October 5-11, 2006, the Hungarian artist's harrowing experience inspired the 1940 novel, *Darkness at Noon*, by Arthur Koestler.

2 Jeanie Radakovich, unpublished manuscript, September 30, 2000, p. 10.

3 Although it is certain Ruth attended University of Michigan during the early 1940s, it is unclear whether Ruth received a baccalaureate. There is no existing diploma or certificate, save a University of Michigan identification card for 1941-1942, displaying a photo of Ruth that indicates she belonged to the class of 1943.

4 Jeanie Radakovich, *Ruth Clark Radakovich*, unpublished curriculum vita, July 16, 2003, p. 3.

5 For background on SAC see Deborah Norton, "A History of the School for American Craftsmen," *Metalsmith* 5, no. 1 (winter 1985): pp. 14-21.

6 Radakovich, unpublished manuscript, p. 42.

7 For a discussion of Hans Christensen's tenure at Georg Jensen see Toni Greenbaum, "Braving the Modern: Georg Jensen Jewelry, 1925-1970," in David A. Taylor, ed., *Georg Jensen Jewelry* (exh. cat. New Haven: Yale University Press for The Bard Graduate Center, New York, 2005): pp. 87-88.

8 Michael Jerry, interview by Toni Greenbaum, 7 October 2006.

9 Rose Slivka, "Radakovich," *Craft Horizons* 18, no. 5 (September-October 1958): p. 30. Toza's opinions were similar to those of Henning Koppel, a progressive artist, who began designing for Georg Jensen in 1945.

10 Christensen was, in fact, responsible for realizing Koppel's sculptural, albeit technically challenging, designs at Georg Jensen, and often expressed frustration with his impractical approach.

11 Like several other mid-twentieth century jewelers, the Radakoviches worked on the rudiments of model-making for casting with a dental technician, since the skill was not covered in most American jewelry-making curriculums. Ruth, in fact, continued to use dental tools to carve wax throughout her career.

12 All three embraced a surrealist aesthetic by depicting bizarre human figures, sometimes Cyclops-like, with the one eye represented by a semi-precious stone. See Toni Greenbaum, *Messengers of Modernism: American Studio Jewelry, 1940-1960* (exh. cat. Montreal: Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts in association with Flammarion, 1996).

13 This 1956 jewelry exhibition was the second in a series. It originated at the Memorial Art Gallery and traveled for two years under the auspices of Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) to locations around the United States, including the Museum of Contemporary Crafts (now Museum of Arts & Design) in New York City. The first show, in 1955, was co-sponsored by the Huntington Galleries in Huntington, West Virginia, where it was first mounted.

14 David Campbell, "National Jewelry Show at Rochester," *Craft Horizons* 17, no. 1 (February 1957): p. 34.

15 Shop One was a retail establishment in Rochester, founded in 1952 by Pearson, Prip, woodworker Tage Frid, and ceramicist Franz Wildenhain.

16 Arline Fisch, interview by Toni Greenbaum, 13 October 2006.

17 In 1966 Toza inaugurated the bronze foundry at San Diego State University, where he also taught sculpture.

18 Marilyn Hagberg, "The Flying Radakoviches," *San Diego Magazine* 21, no. 7 (May 1969): p. 100.

19 For a history of Charles Loloma see Martha Hopkins Streuver, *Loloma: Beauty is His Name* (exh. cat. Santa Fe: Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, 2005).

20 For a history of the exhibition series see Jo Lauria and Suzanne Baizerman, eds., *California Design* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2005).

21 Jennie and Francis Guth, "Munich: International Handcrafts Fair," *Craft Horizons* 24, no. 5 (September-October 1964): p. 24.

22 See Lee Nordness, *Objects: USA* (exh. cat. New York: The Viking Press, 1970).

The author wishes to thank Jeanie Radakovich, whose deep commitment to preserving her parents' artistic legacy facilitated the writing of this article.

Metal Clay

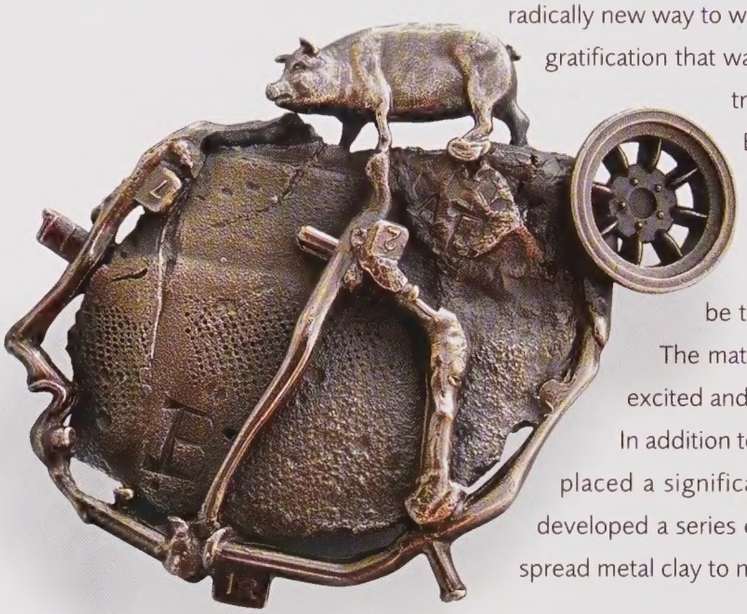
On the Cusp

by Donald Friedlich

Metal clay was first introduced to the American market in 1996 by Mitsubishi Materials Corporation of Japan, under the brand name of Precious Metal Clay (PMC). A few years later, a competing material, Art Clay Silver, came on the scene. The use of both materials has exploded; roughly two million dollars of metal clay was sold in the U.S. in 2005. Now a decade old, the medium merits a close look to assess its evolution and the current state of artistic practice.

Tim McCreight, an advisor to Mitsubishi in the U.S. as well as metal clay's primary proponent, recognized from the beginning that the material is especially well suited to self-taught metalsmiths and people who are new to the field. "Metal clay offered a radically new way to work with precious metals," says McCreight, "a freedom and immediate gratification that was unknown in the 5,000-year history of metalsmithing." Compared to traditional goldsmithing, metal clay has a relatively short learning curve. Basic skills can usually be acquired in a matter of days, with advanced instruction taking less than a week. Further, metal clay does not require much equipment, just a kiln and some rudimentary tools. As a result, people can easily work with it in their homes, and classes can be taught outside traditional studios in hotel meeting rooms and the like. The material engages a completely new audience and very quickly gets them excited and making precious objects. In this regard, it has no equal.

In addition to training makers, the manufacturer and distributors of metal clay have placed a significant emphasis on training teachers. McCreight and his colleagues developed a series of master classes and a certification program, which greatly helped to spread metal clay to new audiences, and fomented its own vibrant subculture.



J. Fred Woell
Market Place Pin, 2005
fine silver, sterling
height 2"

Tina Rath,
Condylactic Gigantea (brooch), 2006
fine silver, pink ivorywood, mink, diamonds
1 3/4 x 1"

CeCe Wire
Lucerne Granary (ring), 2005
fine silver, sterling

Metal clay has one quality that isn't apparent to someone who hasn't handled the material: Because it is 90 percent precious metal (the balance is water and an organic binder that burn off during firing), its relative heft provides much more direct sensory feedback than wax casting (wax is roughly one-tenth the weight of silver). With metal clay one is more aware of the weight of the final object, and, despite the fact that it moves like clay, it feels like metal in the hand.

Of course, as with other materials and processes, the ability to work with metal clay, or even to teach it, does not necessarily mean that one can use it in an artistically inspired manner, and despite the material's impressive growth, acceptance by the mainstream art jewelry world has been slow. Some still regard the material with a degree of skepticism. Those who have spent years acquiring their much-prized metalsmithing skills look down on metal clay as hobbyist material, and don't consider it "real metal." Many are unfamiliar with the artists working in the field. One jeweler commented, "I haven't seen that much work in it, but so far I'm not impressed."

With metal clay one is much more aware of the weight of the final object, and, despite the fact that it moves like clay, it feels like metal in the hand.

In addition, PMC's original formulation suffered from 30 percent shrinkage when fired, thus coining an unfortunate "Shrinky Dink" association. Although subsequent versions only shrink about 12 percent, can be fired at lower temperatures, and are denser and less brittle, regrettably this negative connotation has stuck.

While some university faculty have added metal clay to their programs, others feel they simply don't have room for another process in an already crowded curriculum. Some teachers are also concerned that introducing a material with such immediacy will preclude their students from developing the needed patience and skills demanded by traditional jewelry techniques.

While these negative attitudes are somewhat understandable, they are also quite familiar; similar concerns were often expressed when lost wax casting, electroforming, hydraulic press forming, reactive metals and other new techniques were first introduced. By now we should realize that new materials or techniques are not intrinsically bad or corrupting, but are better viewed as opportunities in need of

top
Claire Holliday
Pendant, 2006
fine silver, sterling
height 2 1/4"

above
Sanaè Asayama
Brooch, 1997
24k gold, 18k gold, pearls
height 2"

Does it take advantage of metal clay's ceramic qualities and genuinely exploit the fact that metal clay is, first, formable with the ease of clay and then is almost magically transformed, like caterpillar to butterfly, into a silver or gold object?

realization. It takes time for a field to set aside its own history and preconceptions, and even longer for artists to discover and integrate a new material's unique technical and expressive qualities into artistically provocative work.

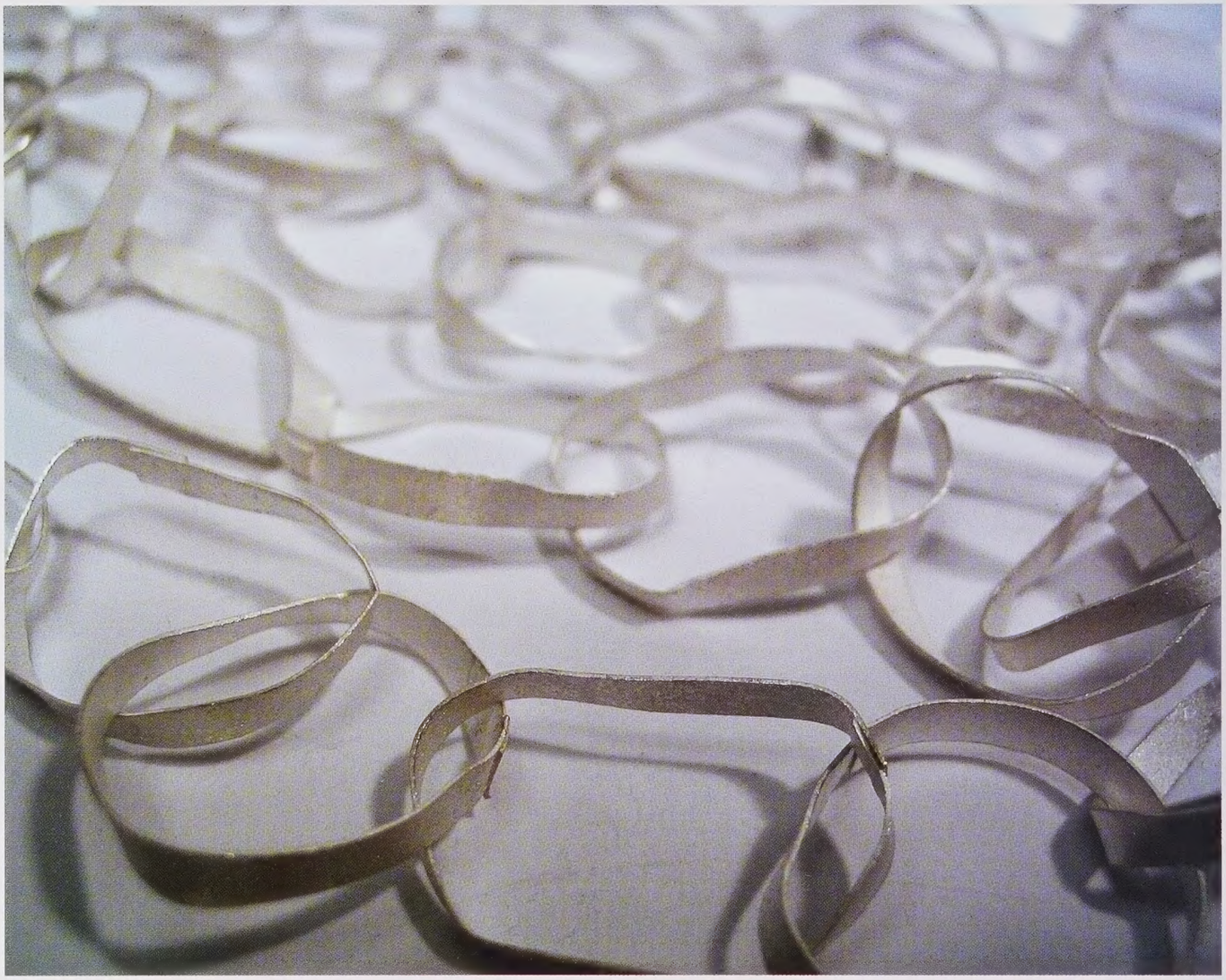
Objects made of metal clay raise the same critical questions that arise when considering any work of art. What does the object communicate? Does the object speak with an expressive voice that is unique to its material? Has the object been done before to the point of being trite or is it new and distinctive? Could it be better made in another way, with other materials? Does it exploit the material's ability to showcase the imprint of the hand in ways metalsmithing cannot? When it is inappropriate to have the hand in evidence, does it demonstrate proper technical control and refinement of surface and form? Does it take advantage of metal clay's ceramic qualities and genuinely exploit the fact that metal clay is, first, formable with the ease of clay and then is almost magically transformed, like caterpillar to butterfly, into a silver or gold object?

One of the unique qualities of metal clay is its ability to take on almost any form with great ease. That said, its formability can lead to gloppy and unresolved shapes. Using metal clay in a crisp, clean manner is a challenge. Some artists are able to master metal clay to such an extent that their forms appear fabricated of sheet, when in fact, the work would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to fabricate. These artists control metal clay, instead of letting the material control them.

CeCe Wire provides an excellent example of mastery over metal clay, in her skillfully rendered hollow double rings with three-dimensional agricultural and architectural images from

Celie Fago
Bracelet, 2006
fine silver, 24k gold foil,
18k gold, sterling

Tim McCreight
Brooch, 2005
fine silver, glass bead,
silk thread
height 2 3/4"



Hannah Louise Lamb
Necklace, 2005
fine silver
each link: approx 1" diam.

the American farm, such as barns and grain silos. Wire's silo forms are especially well executed with a delicate ribbing that accentuates the cylindrical shape and clearly refers to the construction of actual silos. While these forms could be fabricated or cast, doing so would be very laborious. Metal clay is well suited to this sort of hollow fabrication; it allows the entire top of her ring to be made and fired at one time.

In Tina Rath's sensual silver, wood, and mink brooch, she maintains the distinctive style of her well-established jewelry, but uses metal clay to make the diamond tipped tentacles extend and compliment that style. It is a challenge for an artist to bring a new material into her vocabulary, to be sensitive enough to exploit that material for its unique qualities, and at the same time, to maintain her own mature artistic voice, but Rath succeeds admirably.

Like traditional clay, one of the most distinct qualities of metal clay is its ability to show a seemingly endless variety of textures. This tempts some makers to "go over the top" with texture and pattern. Knowing when to stop is critical to the success of a design.

Showing control and restraint, Claire Holliday marries inventive choices of texture with unique forms to create a diverse and exceptional body of jewelry. As much as any work in metal clay today, Holliday's jewelry takes advantage of the material's ceramic qualities. Her bark-textured pendant has a distinctive clay-like rawness that brings to mind some of the ceramic work of Peter Voulkos. The composition is simple, but extremely potent. Every mark feels right. The same can be said about her layered and highly organic *Maize Pendant*.

Like Holliday, Sanaè Asayama exploits metal clay to its best advantage. The texture and gesture of her 24k gold, amethyst, and tourmaline brooch is sensitive and delicate while at the same time bold and dynamic. One can feel the movement of the

Sharon Portelance
Ring, 1999
fine silver, 18k gold
1 x 1"

petal-like elements that form a wreath of oxidized silver metal clay. The organic circle is then contrasted to the geometric perfection of a fabricated gold ring shank.

Fred Woell is a pivotal and influential figure in contemporary American jewelry, and his considerable skills and experience lead to informed decisions about which process will best achieve an artistic goal. His *Market Place Pin* incorporates richly textured metal clay and his signature cast sterling elements taken from American culture; as is often the case with Woell's work, this brooch is humorous and wryly critical of American consumerism.

The brooches of Tim McCreight reveal a Zen sensibility in their use of repeated line elements that each show a subtle calligraphic variation of width, as if it were painted with a brush. In one brooch, a single red bead is held in place by gold-colored thread. The design brings to mind the directness of construction of traditional Japanese wrapping and packaging.

Celie Fago's bracelet is richly patterned, creating a surface that resembles cuneiform tablets. The patterns continue on the articulated hinges and clasp of the bracelet. The hinges are used for practical reasons, but they are also a vital design detail, framing each of the four embossed panels. The straight-edged hinges are elegantly contrasted to the irregular outside edges of the panels that resemble the deckled ends of handmade paper. Fago has also accentuated the silver surface with gold kum boo.

It is a challenge for an artist to bring a new material into her vocabulary, to be sensitive enough to exploit that material for its unique qualities, and at the same time, to maintain her own mature artistic voice...

clay as if it were a crashing wave. Asayama's equally successful brooch of 24k gold and pearls is made of dynamic extrusions of metal clay that flow in a seemingly random manner and cause the eye to travel around the brooch, as one would the streaking drips of a Jackson Pollock painting. The circular form grounds and contrasts the snaking gold line, while the form's hollowness adds to the compelling perception of delicacy. Gold is expensive and 24k metal clay even more so. It is refreshing to find an artist who can work in costly materials with artistic abandon.

In an untitled ring from 1999, Sharon Portelance carefully maintains the touch of her fingerprints in each of the delicate

Kathleen Browne makes theatrical and lyrical rings that bring to mind the tiers of a wedding cake. The rings are decorated with icing-like rosette forms that are designed to jiggle as the hand of the wearer moves. Jewelry is one of the few art media that is generally seen in motion, and Browne exploits that unique quality. She also applies gold metal clay sparingly to accentuate her forms.

In a beautiful childlike chain necklace, Hannah Louise Lamb repeats similar elements that reveal the hand's ability to bring subtle variation to the shaping of metal clay. The design is simple, restrained, very wearable and elegant. It cries out to be played with and touched.

Unlike lost wax casting, in which hollow construction is very challenging, complex hollow forms can be made relatively easily in metal clay by shaping the clay around a core that burns out during firing. Working hollow has many benefits in jewelry: it minimizes costs, reduces weight and allows for the production of larger objects than would be practical as jewelry were they solid.

One of the most frequent applications of hollow construction in metal clay has been in bead making. Chris Ramsey's hollow silver and gold beads are inspired by a wasp's nest. Turning the leather-hard beads on a spindle in a drill press, Ramsey creates a rich linear surface pattern that extenuates the form of the bead.

In the field of contemporary jewelry and metalsmithing several artists come to mind whose aesthetic or technical approaches converge with that of metal clay. Gerd Rothmann's remarkable gold jewelry taken from molds of human body parts, especially hands, is visually simple but extraordinarily effective and delicate. The metal clay world can learn from his example of restrained texture and masterful use of one simple idea to create exceptional work. Karl Fritsch often works with wax that is formed around found commercial jewelry components that he then invests and casts as one. The work recontextualizes the found object, bringing it new life. While conceptual in a way yet unknown to metal clay, Fritsch's work shares an aesthetic with the medium.

Some of the best artwork produced today in any field is the result of working between two mediums to find new ground that hasn't been traveled before.

Alternative materials are frequently combined with metal clay, as they are in much of today's art jewelry. Because metal clay and polymer clay employ similar tools and skills, polymer artists have been drawn to metal clay as a convenient way to bring precious metals into their work. Kelly Russell very effectively weds polymer clay with metal clay in her bold floral brooches titled *Budding* and *Black Pearl Podling*. The brooches read as abstract corsages, with a softly muted color palette and inventive attention to detail.

While one naturally views metal clay in the context of metalsmithing and jewelry, any artist serious about the material should also examine the textures, forms, and themes of contemporary ceramics. Ceramics is the most plastic of mediums and it provides a veritable goldmine of information and inspiration. Based on the work done so far in metal clay, the ceramics world may well contain the secrets to its next evolutionary development.

Chris Ramsey
Bead, 1996
fine silver

Although metal clay can certainly stand on its own, combining it with other processes or materials has yielded some excellent results. A jeweler with a full range of metal skills, such as soldering, fabrication, and forming, as well as a knowledge of the wider craft and art world, will be best equipped to make memorable work.

Sensitivity to a material, innovation, and testing limits are at the heart of making art. Some of the best artwork produced today in any field is the result of working between two mediums to find new ground that hasn't been traveled before. By its very nature, metal clay is ideally suited to working in the cusp between metalsmithing and ceramics, drawing on the best of each to create engaging work. As artists continue to experiment with metal clay, they will no doubt discover unforeseen possibilities for this young but promising medium.

Donald Friedlich is a jeweler in Madison, Wisconsin, and a former SNAG President.

This article was adapted from the author's essay "Progress and Potential" in *PMC Decade: The First Ten Years of Precious Metal Clay*, published in 2006 by the Brynmorgen Press.

left
Kathleen Browne
Rattle Ring, 2000
fine silver, sterling, 24k gold, 18k gold
1 x 2"

Kelly Russell
Budding and *Black Pearl Podling*, 2006
fine silver, polymer clay, sterling, black pearl
each height 3"

REVIEWS

"MARILYN DA SILVA, SECOND NATURE: A BIRD'S EYE VIEW"
MOBILIA GALLERY, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
SEPTEMBER 12–OCTOBER 14, 2006

by CLAIRE SANFORD

Marilyn da Silva's latest collection speaks to another time and place, when illustration was the sole form of capturing the beauty and science of ornithology. Late-nineteenth-century bird artists such as John James Audubon transformed the recording of bird specimens to a high art form, adding natural and sometimes romanticized settings and often lending elaborate hand coloring to the printed illustrations. Da Silva has picked up where these artists have left off, giving dimension as well as color to old etched images. She has used birds often, describing them "as metaphors for everyday experiences, from personal to universal..."

Like its nineteenth-century predecessors, this body of work describes the birds' feathers, coloring and, in some cases, nests and habitat, all drawn with exquisite detail. Etched copper panels create backdrops for the larger wall pieces, with the birds, branches and nests created out of sheet metal and wire. With the exception of the chalice, nothing is formed fully in the round. Instead, implied volume and an artful use of foreshortening create something that belies the static and hard quality of the metal. The suggested motion of the birds adds a sense of lightness to the pieces, as if you could feel the bird coming to rest on a finger or caught in that moment just before it takes flight.

The collection is rich in detail but wonderfully simple in composition. The texture of the etched surfaces plays off the subtle patination and hand coloring for which da Silva is well known. The "She Bird" series features four small wall panels, each with a single bird and branch placed like a corsage against a field of patinated metal. Da Silva cites "the simplicity and elegance" of Japanese flower arrangements as an influence, and one can see the connection. Like the deceptively simple Ikebana arrangements she draws from, nothing of the balance or gesture of the pieces is left to chance. In *She Bird IV*, the Connecticut Warbler's exposed underwing mimics the texture of the accompanying flower, and the graceful curvature of its body echoes the gently arched leaves.

The series of six large wall pieces, each encased in a glass-fronted box, recalls a group of museum specimens. Using old illustrations as a template, the backgrounds are heavily etched copper panels, with the central elements, branches, leaves and nests, standing proud. But the focus of each of da Silva's pieces is the birds. Meticulously rendered, expressive, and close to life-size, they are brightness and beauty made manifest. In each of da Silva's pieces in the exhibition (except for the chalice), the birds can be lifted out and worn as brooches and, while not particularly light, their relative flatness makes them surprisingly wearable. The space left when a bird/brooch is removed reveals its image in 2-D; a shadow of what was there. Magnets lock the birds back to their perches. While these details may not seem remarkable, the care with which each is handled (such as the tiny air holes on the backs of the brooches) reinforces the integrity of the whole.

Like the historical images that she draws from, da Silva makes a connection between humans and birds in their natural settings. In *Treehouse*, two small silver chairs balance on the branch adjacent to the Golden Orioles; their bright eyes peer beadily at the chairs as if they were bugs. In *Lullaby*, a miniature silver cradle rests on the edge of the Nightingale's nest, harkening to the maternal care with which the mother bird instinctively raises her young. Although these added details are not dramatically poetic or transformative, they insert a subtle anthropomorphism.

While the chalice, titled *Haven*, is an accomplished piece of metalsmithing, it is removed from the historical context of the ornithological illustrations, and has a more random feeling about it. As opposed to the wall pieces, in which the birds seem ready and capable of taking flight, the Prairie Wood Warbler, partially concealed behind the winding plant forms, appears either caged or afraid.

Long used in prose and poetry as a metaphor for our desires for flight and freedom, bird imagery is universal. We tend to like to see ourselves in the wild world, to make sense of how we fit in; but as it is ubiquitous, it can also be overused. In "Second Nature: A Bird's Eye View," da Silva has taken something that could have been clichéd and makes it both fresh and beautifully new.

Claire Sanford is a metalsmith, jeweler, and partner in Top Dog Studio in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

top to bottom
Second Nature: Lullaby (two brooches), 2006
copper, sterling silver, gesso, colored pencils, printer ink, magnets
12 x 12"

Second Nature: She Bird 4 (brooch), 2006
copper, sterling silver, gesso, colored pencils, acrylic pin
6 x 9"

Second Nature: Treehouse (two brooches), 2006
copper, sterling silver, gesso, colored pencils, printer ink, magnets
12 x 12"

Photos: M. Lee Fatherree

"FEEDING DESIRE: DESIGN AND THE TOOLS OF THE TABLE, 1500-2005"

COOPER-HEWITT, NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM, NEW YORK
MAY 5–OCTOBER 29, 2006

by ROSANNE RAAB

"Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table, 1500–2005," culled primarily from more than 1,550 pieces in the Cooper-Hewitt's collection, narrates the story of eating utensils and the etiquette associated with the consumption of food in the Western world. Objects range from casual picnic utensils to formal, multi-piece place settings on a nineteenth-century Victorian table, from precious gold, silver, and carved crystal to stainless steel, plastic, and wood. The collection is a feast for the eyes.

The exhibition is organized thematically rather than chronologically, with sections on the history of cutlery, methods of production, and materials. It addition, it explores flatware designed for important social functions, such as afternoon tea in eighteenth-century England; prison meals; or black-tie dinners on the 20th Century Limited, for which Henry Dreyfuss conceived of décor as a total design experience.

The desire to eat draws all of us to the subject, and guest curator, food historian Darra Goldstein, suggests that "cutlery evolved in response to the diner's need to satisfy both appetite and design."

The exhibition documents the history of cutlery, a term generally used in modern times to embrace all types of flatware, including forks and spoons.[1] Knives were the first tools to come to the table, used for cutting and spearing meat. The spoon, originally rounded, was more suited in its oval form to carrying gruel to the mouths of babies and the elderly. The fork was little used for several centuries because of its negative associations with the Devil and the effeminate manners of Henri III (1551–1589). By the end of the eighteenth century, all three were commonly utilized on the Continent, but it took the Industrial Revolution and the discovery of vast silver mines in America to bring cutlery into the hands of the masses.

Sarah Coffin, the Cooper-Hewitt's curator of seventeenth and eighteenth-century decorative arts, has researched this subject for almost 30 years, and assembled the collection with Goldstein and Ellen Lupton, curator of contemporary design. Of particular interest is an extensive array of serving pieces, including an ice cream hatchet, a macaroni server, and a Saratoga potato chip spoon, all manufactured by American companies, including Tiffany and Gorham, which created a huge market for silver and silver-plated flatware in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Silver was all about wealth, social status, and civility. Knowing the rules of etiquette required knowledge of cutlery design, and how to properly convey food from your plate to mouth with dexterity and finesse.

The exhibition opens with a lavish installation of customized traveling flatware sets enclosed in extravagant metal and leather containers, works of art themselves, crafted by artisans in Germany, The Netherlands, and France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These sets were essential to the upper classes on the move, as innkeepers did not provide these implements; private households only began accumulating dining tools for guests in the later part of the eighteenth century.

Philippa Glanville, Senior Research Fellow at London's V&A Museum, reminds us in her catalogue that "metal is at the heart of the story of flatware in the West." An alloy or a single metal, be it stamped, cast, or struck from a die, was an essential element of the knife, fork, and spoon. Examples abound in a rich array of designs, ranging from silver pistol-shaped knives and forks with steel blades manufactured in England, to a set of French fruit and dessert servers of gilt metal with mother-of-pearl handles, boxed in red velvet. The collection is augmented with sample pages from pattern books, and engravings depicting the process of electroplating and workers grinding blades.

Contemporary craftsmen contribute to the richness of this exhibition. Michele Oka Doner's sculptural *Spatula*, riddled with random negative spaces is more about form than function. Also included is Robyn Nichols' nature-inspired silver flatware, *Nasturtium Leaves*, and the "lyrical and functional" place setting *Wishbone*, a stainless steel design by Joost During produced for Nambe, Santa Fe. In her catalogue essay, "Modern Flatware and the Design of Lifestyle," curator Lupton draws attention to the work of Boris Bally, one of several designers who create objects from recycled materials (in Bally's case, road signs), achieving cutting-edge flatware patterns inspired by industrial structures. The colorful anodized aluminum *Picnic Flatware* by David Tisdale and Ted Muehling's elegant silver cutlery cast from twigs augment the art of dining with their individual expressions.

Rosanne Raab is an independent curator and collection advisor for twentieth-century craft and design.

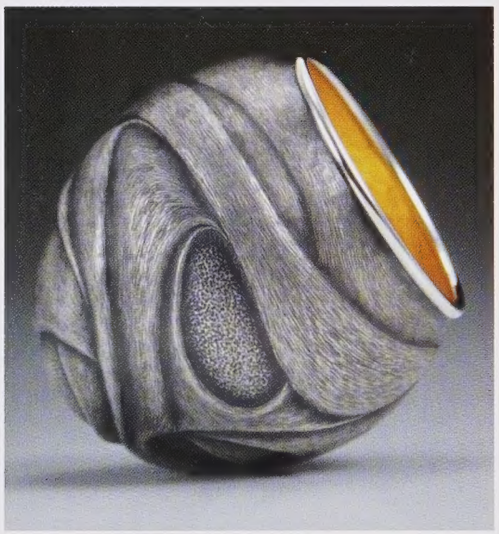
clockwise from top left
Traveling flatware with case, early 17th C.
steel, mother-of-pearl, gilded leather, cotton
Photo: Matt Flynn

Robyn Nichols
Nasturtium Leaves (servers), 1991
silver
Photo: Matt Flynn

Michele Oka Doner
Spatula, 1998
silver
length 16"
Photo: Nick Merrick for Hedrich Blessing

[1] Harold Newman, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Silverware* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987)

REVIEWS



"DAVID HUANG: VESSELS OF IMAGINATION"
STANDARD FEDERAL GALLERY AT THE MEIJER GARDENS AND SCULPTURE PARK, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
ORGANIZED IN COLLABORATION WITH LAFONTSEE GALLERY
SEPTEMBER 29–DECEMBER 31, 2006

by PHIL CARRIZZI

The campus of Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park is the sprawling home of monumental outdoor works of art by Moore, Oldenburg, Goldsworthy, Rodin, and others. The grounds, and the facilities housing special exhibitions and indoor gardens, are grand in scale, but designed to allow a curious public to inspect and contemplate the tiniest details of the organisms and creations on display. This quiet space is especially appropriate for the consideration of David Huang's recent work; it allows the general audience to cycle through dozens of questions that arise in the face of these small, articulate, glowing vessels.

"Vessels of Imagination" featured the metal holloware of Huang, a contemporary metalsmith creating abstract "utilitarian" form on an intimate scale in fine materials without an overt conceptual framework. It was an uncommon opportunity for an exceptional artist endeavoring to make relevant work in a struggling medium.

Huang is able to present his brand of container with as much confidence as the sculpture that surrounds it throughout the park; trusting that he has sufficiently attended to the formal properties to interest a wide audience, without giving them a history lesson, technical instructions, or personal world view.

Huang's objects possess both a regularity *and* a variation of form and scale. At a distance they are engaging: smooth, polished, crusty, or shining orbs. From 12 inches, they have incredibly rich topology of line, form, and texture. Close up, they are as well considered and well wrought as the work of any master smith. Huang is a prolific vessel maker, each piece angle-raised from sheet metal in diameters from 6 to 36 inches. They have a somewhat inverted traditional focus—the interiors seem to sing with light reflected in gold and palladium leaf. In much of his other work, the mystery of how so much light enters and is encased in such small openings has been enough to engage viewers. Here the virtuosity of his pattern design and chasing technique on vessels such as *Whorled Flow #489* command the visual weight of his objects.

Ideas flow from his mind, through his tools, and into his materials; but they flow back as well. The organic forms are an intuitive response to how a hammer at the end of his arm moves metal over handmade stakes. Sterling silver rims are carefully shaped and fit to respond to exactly where and when his metal asked him to put his last blow. The lines and patterns are fluid responses to the feel and look of those forms, as his hands trace over them with a mechanical pencil. The bulges, which push and pull material in the shape of those lines, are a response to his fingers guiding chisels and punches against the walls. The layers of flamed chemicals that color the exteriors, and the almost transparent, noble metals brushed into the interiors, respond to the depths and texture of surface, as well as the way that form bends and plays with light and shadow.

These are serious objects, which would not have been produced, and could not have been designed, by a less gifted artist. Huang works in a quantity and with a consistency that one expects in quality studio multiples; but he is unusually able to attend to the integrity of each object as an individual. This is mainly because they are immediate responses to a host of stimuli existing only in the process of creation. These extraordinary vessels are the product of a tuned imagination *in practice*.

Phil Carrizzi is an assistant professor and chair of the Allesee Metals/Jewelry Design program at Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University.

clockwise from top
Luminous Relic #496, 2006
copper, sterling silver, 23k gold leaf
20 x 16 x 16"

Luminous Relic #413, 2005
copper, sterling silver, 23k gold leaf
12 3/4 x 12 x 12"

Whorled Flow #489, 2006
sterling silver, 23k gold leaf
3 1/2 x 3 1/2 x 3 1/2"

"RENATA CROWE"

VETRI INTERNATIONAL GLASS, SEATTLE
DECEMBER 1–31, 2006

by MATTHEW KANGAS

Renata Crowe's earlier endeavors included custom-designed and ready-to-wear hats, which have been sold through Barneys New York stores. A graduate of the Helen Lefeaux School of Fashion Design in Vancouver, Crowe also studied glassblowing at Red Deer College in Alberta and jewelry making in Vancouver, where she now lives.

Her U.S. gallery debut at Vetri International Glass wedded metals to glass in a series of elegant and witty bracelets and necklaces, with references to dangerous chemicals and pseudo-elements like kryptonite. Small colored, clear, or sandblasted circles, beads, disks, and ampules are connected with sterling silver key-ring shapes, chain links, and dog-tag-like strands of smaller silver spheres.

Before her current foray into metals, the 42-year-old Crowe concentrated on her hats at It's On Your Head, her boutique in Hyper Hyper, a fashion mini-mall in the Knightsbridge area of London. After two years in Britain, Crowe moved back to Vancouver in 1990, and ran Big Top Hat Shop before launching her current space, Crowe Street, where she makes her hats, sculptures, and the new glass-and-metal jewelry to order.

As many self-employed metal artists and jewelers know, it is a challenge to balance the market demands for handmade jewelry with a yearning for more expressive works. In the Vetri grouping, Crowe introduced six new works, each of which has its own unique character.

Fragile/Futile/Fucked is the most conceptual, with its title stamped on three separate amethyst-colored glass, silver-tipped ampules, each on a separate dog-tag chain and meant to be worn together. A trio of ex-boyfriends, recreational drug containers, or ornamental ID tags for the wearer, this work has the mixture of danger and frivolity common to all Crowe's new work.

Cirque Necklace is a more elaborate extension of the same idea, but with five rows of small clear, red, and grey test tube-type forms. With nine in the top row followed by rows of seven, five, three, and one, the necklace almost becomes a protective breastplate, undercut by the delicacy of suspended glass tubes, all connected by links smaller than those in the silver neck chain.

Its companion piece, *Cirque Bracelet*, is more cluttered and jumbled, wrapping around the wrist with silver key-ring circles that are inserted through small openings in each glass tube. These could also be seen as see-through red lipstick containers or vials for illicit drugs while at the discotheque.

Kryptonite features 13 graduated borosilicate glass containers that purport to contain Superman's nemesis element affixed to a chain of 26 silver circles. Crowe is playing off necklaces of Victorian crystal, as well as diverse sources including the adornment of indigenous peoples. The glass tubes also imply a defensive quality, as if warding off "evil spirits."

Much simpler, *Big Wheels Necklace* is comprised of grey circles that could be tiny black tires for a long-haul trucker's wife or partner. Its plain elegance contrasts with the show's most difficult piece, *Blue Choker*. Three pierced irregular circles are mounted on the outline of a silver rectangle. Angular bands of silver support the blue rings, with one ominously overlapping the upper edge close to the wearer's neck. A triple strand of smaller glass beads parodies a stuffy multiple-strand pearl necklace.

As Crowe commented in an interview, her work "is not for everyone; it's not for chickens," so the entire grouping calls for self-confident wearers willing to respond to queries, comments and come-ons. In this sense, the work fits into the Pacific Northwest tradition of assertive women's ornament. By rejecting the Ellensburg found-objects look, however, and stressing the happy marriage of silver and glass, Crowe takes the handmade necklace out of the thrift shop and places it firmly in the realm of the rollicking nighttime crowd.

Matthew Kangas is a Seattle-based author and critic.

clockwise from top left
Blue Choker, 2006
flameworked Moretti glass and sterling silver
14 1/2 x 2 1/2"

Big Wheels Necklace, 2006
flameworked Moretti glass and sterling silver
24 1/2 x 5"

Cirque Bracelet, 2006
flameworked Moretti glass and sterling silver
8 1/2 x 2"

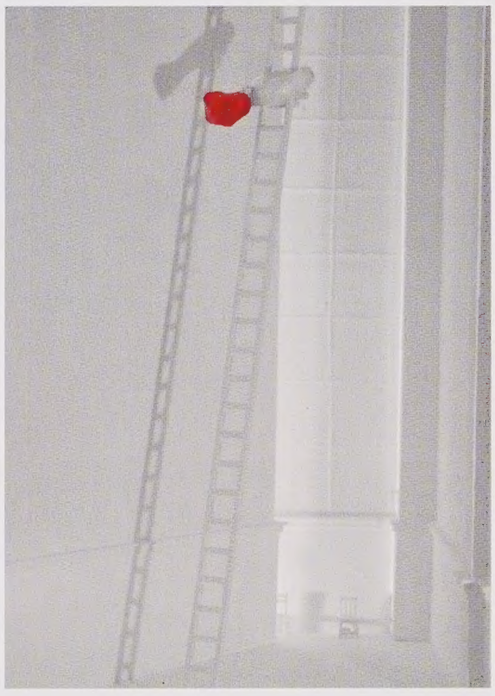
Photos: Lionel Trudel

REVIEWS

"SHAKESPEARE AS GLASS JEWELRY IN DIORAMAS"

GALLERY GEN, NEW YORK, NEW YORK
SEPTEMBER 5–30, 2006

by JOHANNA BRIERLEY



Upon entering gallery gen, visitors were provided with a handout that outlined how the collaborative contributions of four women inspired "Shakespeare as Glass Jewelry in Dioramas." Kaoru Hagiwara, an educator and editor of books on Japanese culture, produced this exhibition by bringing together her sister, Kazuko Matsuoka (a preeminent Shakespearean scholar and translator), her niece, Izumi Matsuoka (a set designer), and glass jewelry artist Kazuko Mitsushima. The written material functions as a kind of theatrical program to introduce viewers to this production and motivate their active engagement with the settings, narratives, and characters presented in the exhibition.

Each diorama consists of an entirely white stage inhabited by one or more of Mitsushima's glass jewelry pieces that serve as tangible representations of Shakespearean characters. The wall-mounted dioramas act as a proscenium arch, clearly distinguishing the space between spectator and spectacle. Upon closer inspection of the miniature environments, open spaces and slits in some of the four-sided walls become apparent. These openings invite the spectator to move around the dioramas, to peek into the stage and at the jewelry from various vantage points.

In two separate related dioramas, rings titled *Romeo* and *Juliet*, are placed in central positions on their separate stages. When looking through the small slits on the side walls, the rings become more difficult to see. As part of the drama, miniature throne-seats are elements of the scene, suggesting the power and control that the ruling households have over the star-crossed lovers. By actively navigating the sets, the spectator becomes engaged in the theatricality of this production.

The rectangular opening in the ceiling of the *Ophelia* diorama accentuates the angular shape of the clear and blue glass components delicately attached with wire to form the necklace. The cut-out also highlights the verticality of the hanging, unfastened necklace dripping and extending beyond the bounds of the set. These repetitions motivate visual connections between the stage set and jewelry that express a specific character-driven narrative, in this case, Ophelia's mental and emotional descent and final demise by drowning in *Hamlet*. Within this setting of the glass necklace, Ophelia acquires a sense of fragility and melancholy. The different perspectives created by these hidden openings encourage the spectator to recognize relationships among the stage sets, jewelry pieces, and Shakespearean narratives and how the context of a piece of jewelry, like the necklace *Ophelia*, influences perception.

Although the spectator continues to play an active role in the production, a certain distance from the jewelry remains. This gap between spectator and spectacle, however, dissipates when the viewer accepts the gallerist's offer to wear a piece of jewelry. By agreeing to put on a part of the exhibition, the spectator now fully engages with the production and even becomes part of it. Moved to the neck of a visitor, the clear and blue glass *Ophelia* necklace now might accentuate a smiling face and the bright happy eyes of the wearer, instead of the mental anguish and turmoil of Shakespeare's Ophelia. The movement of a piece from the dioramas by Izumi Matsuoka to an actual body initiates further reflection on the shifting meanings and interpretations of Mitsushima's jewelry pieces.

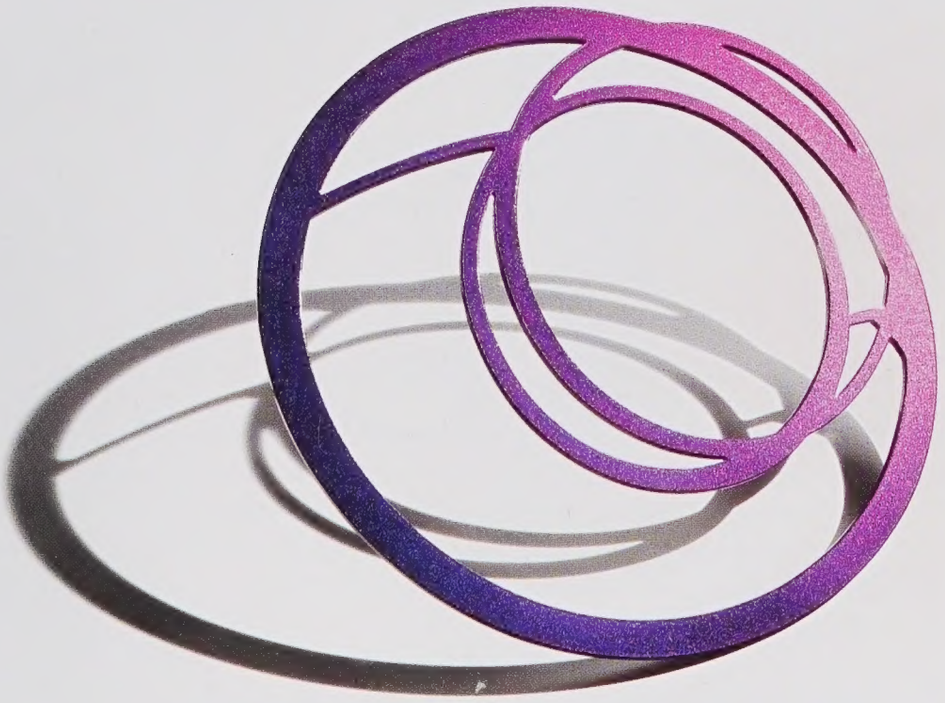
This exhibition is a collaborative venture enabled not only by the actions of the producer, translator, set designer, and director, but also by the participation of the spectators. Encouraging interactions between the viewer and displayed pieces, the exhibition initiates contemplation of how the context and conditions created by display mediate one's experience and understanding of jewelry and, ultimately, exemplifies the rich interplay between jewelry and other art forms such as drama and performance.

Johanna Brierley is a writer and goldsmith living in New York City.

clockwise from top left
Ophelia, 2006
glass, sterling silver wire
diorama approx 24 x 12 x 12"

Romeo, 2006
glass
diorama approx 24 x 12 x 12"

Juliet, 2006
glass
diorama approx 24 x 12 x 12"



"RACHELLE THIEWES: *MIRAGE*"
JEWELERS'WERK GALERIE,
WASHINGTON, D.C.
NOVEMBER 3–24, 2006

by KATE DOBBS ARIAIL

Previous articles on the work of Rachelle Thiewes have noted the difficulties inherent in capturing its essence in either words or photographs. Thiewes's sleek new bracelets and brooches do not make discussion any easier; though they differ in some important ways from her previous work, they still require unmediated experience to be comprehended. To paraphrase Magritte, this photograph of a Rachelle Thiewes bracelet is not the bracelet—let alone the splendidly sculptural object-in-space—that the bracelet turns out to be when you slip it on your arm.

At first glance, the constructions in the "Mirage" grouping appear completely static, a stark reversal of the kineticism of Thiewes's well-known earlier works, in which the impulse to motion is apparent even when they are at rest in a case. The brooches are seemingly simple flat steel cutouts, and the bracelets are made from two or three steel rings angled apart by uneven lengths of curved supports, cut from the same metal sheet. The pieces are finished with chrome plating, bluing, or vividly colored high-tech automotive body paints. It is only as you turn your head, or take a step away, that these works flicker to life, and demand to be worn, springing out of the case and into the dimensional world like forms from a pop-up book. The bracelets will turn on the wrist, but they are less about their own motion or the movement of the body, and more about the changing relationship of object and light source.

Thiewes has been interested in the reflective and light-absorptive qualities of her materials for decades, but in recent years she has become increasingly interested in shadow as the counterpoint of light—especially the intense light of the Chihuahuan desert environment of her El Paso, Texas, home. Where in her earlier pieces, light and dark materials were useful in creating rhythm and establishing musical references, the visual qualities of the "Mirage" series brings to mind literary works, like Ellen Gilchrist's *Light Can Be Both Wave and Particle*, or Wallace Stegner's *Angle of Repose*, both of which rely on observed physical principles for their structural metaphors.

Light in an arid region often has an incisive, almost surgical, quality. In an atmosphere lacking moisture's refractive molecules, forms appear cut, rather than molded, and are further flattened by reflective glare in the intense light. A sense of three-dimensionality is often supplied by deep shadow, rather than by the graduated tones perceived in a softer light. Sometimes the shadows seem more real than the objects, inducing an Escher-like series of reversals of "reality" in the viewer. In the near-ground, color often bleaches out, but in the distance, airborne particles may cause magical iridescence. These visual experiences are Thiewes's underlying materials for "Mirage."

One sees this most clearly in the paired brooch/bracelet set, in its wonderful artist-made display box. The flat chromed steel brooch (held in place in the box and on the body by magnets), highly polished and reflective, delineates the shadow of the curving calligraphy of the dark, blued-steel bracelet resting atop it when it was angled a certain way in the light. But since the "shadow" is bright and the "form" dark, one's ability to feel certain of reality is short-circuited. A surprisingly similar effect occurs when the bracelet is worn. It forms a dark design against the skin, but it also casts its curving, intersecting shadows onto the arm. Is the art the carefully angled steel rings—or are they the tool the artist is using to draw upon your arm? The real art is in the ever-shifting relationship between steel and shadow, as the angle of light and angle of vision change.

The candy-colored bracelets work much the same way. The hot pink and the turquoise remain true, but other colors, thanks to the particulates in the paint film, are as mutable as those on the desert horizon. Purple eludes definition, slipping into blue or black as the light changes. Better still, clear yellow flashes out of hot chartreuse, then reverses suddenly to the gray-blue of a thunderhead, as the lines dance in the light, across the landscape of the body. Their color is uncertain, but their severe beauty is no mirage.

Kate Dobbs Ariail is a cultural critic residing in Durham, North Carolina.

top to bottom
Mirage (brooch), 2006
steel, Kameleon auto paint
4 1/2"diameter x 1/4"depth

Mirage (bracelet with shadow brooch), 2006
bracelet: blued steel
brooch: chromed steel

Mirage (bracelet), 2006
steel, Kandy auto paint

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by Dana Singer

SNAG Welcomes New Editorial Advisory Committee Member

The Editorial Advisory Committee (EAC) of *Metalsmith* welcomes Sharon Church, a studio jeweler and professor of crafts at Philadelphia's University of the Arts. She joins current EAC members Kate Wagle (Chair), Ursula Ilse Neuman, Mija Riedel, Sandie Zilker, and editor Suzanne Ramljak. SNAG sincerely thanks departing EAC member Rachelle Thiewes, professor at University of Texas, El Paso, for her years of dedicated service and wise counsel.

SNAG Board of Directors Strategic Planning Retreat

Earlier this year, the SNAG board of directors held their strategic planning retreat in Eugene, Oregon, site of their home office. With enthusiasm and dedication, the board addressed the most pressing issues within the field and the organization. The plan created from this retreat will be implemented over the next three to five years. The board's last retreat was four years ago, in April 2003.

SNAG and *Metalsmith* Sponsor Educational Seminar

SNAG and *Metalsmith* sponsored "Branding/Personalization/Customization: Finding Your Niche," presented by Judy Lince, executive director of the Georgia Jewelers Association, as part of the Education Seminar program at Manufacturing Jewelers and Suppliers of America's (MJSA) Expo-NY in March.

Exciting New SNAG Website Launched

SNAG recently launched a newly designed and completely overhauled website, with improved functionality, better navigation, and more dynamic and changing content. All transactions—joining, subscribing, renewing, registering for the conference, donations—have been streamlined for efficiency. There is a password-protected Member Area with a range of features, such as an online Member Directory and the advance copy of SNAG News, with various discussion forums soon to be added.

Most important, for the first time, SNAG licensed software that enables us to manage all the content from our office in Eugene, with our webmaster now on staff. SNAG's url remains the same, www.snagmetalsmith.org. This is a website to Bookmark and return to again and again. Watch for regular postings in our Newsroom and Upcoming Deadlines areas.

Dana Singer is executive director of SNAG.

top to bottom
Sharon Church, new member of *Metalsmith*'s Editorial Advisory Committee

SNAG board of directors at the strategic planning retreat in Eugene, Oregon

Judy Lince, conducting a seminar on branding at the MJSA Expo-NY

Home page of SNAG's newly designed website

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Designer & President,
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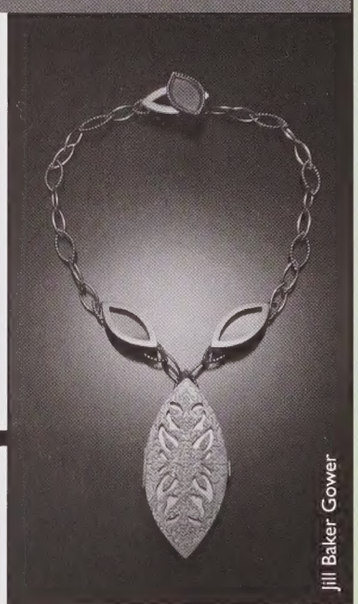
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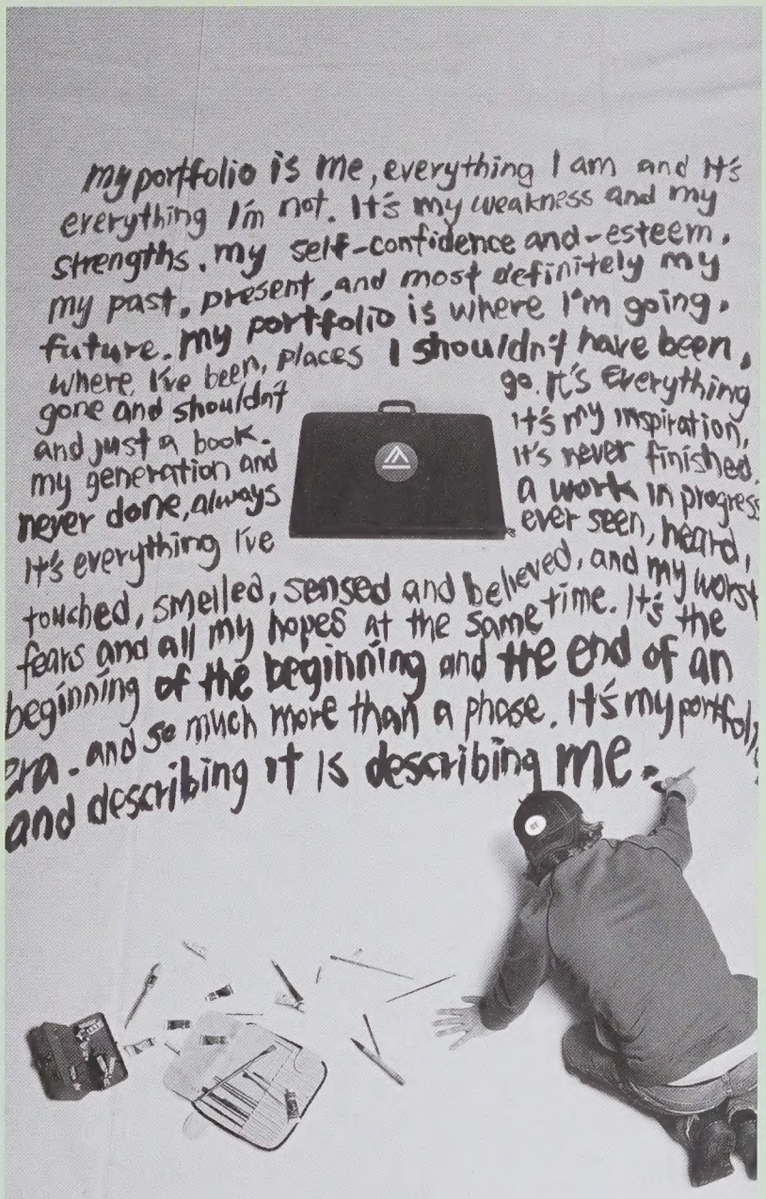
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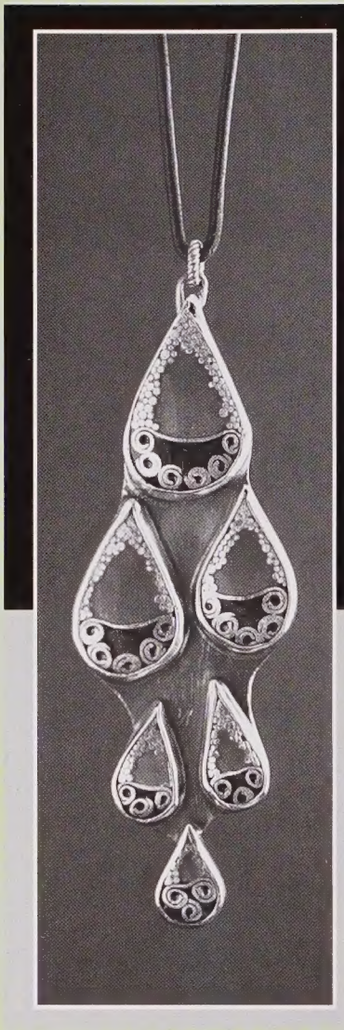

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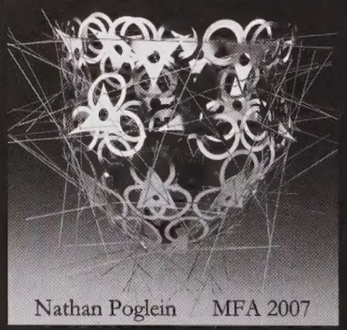

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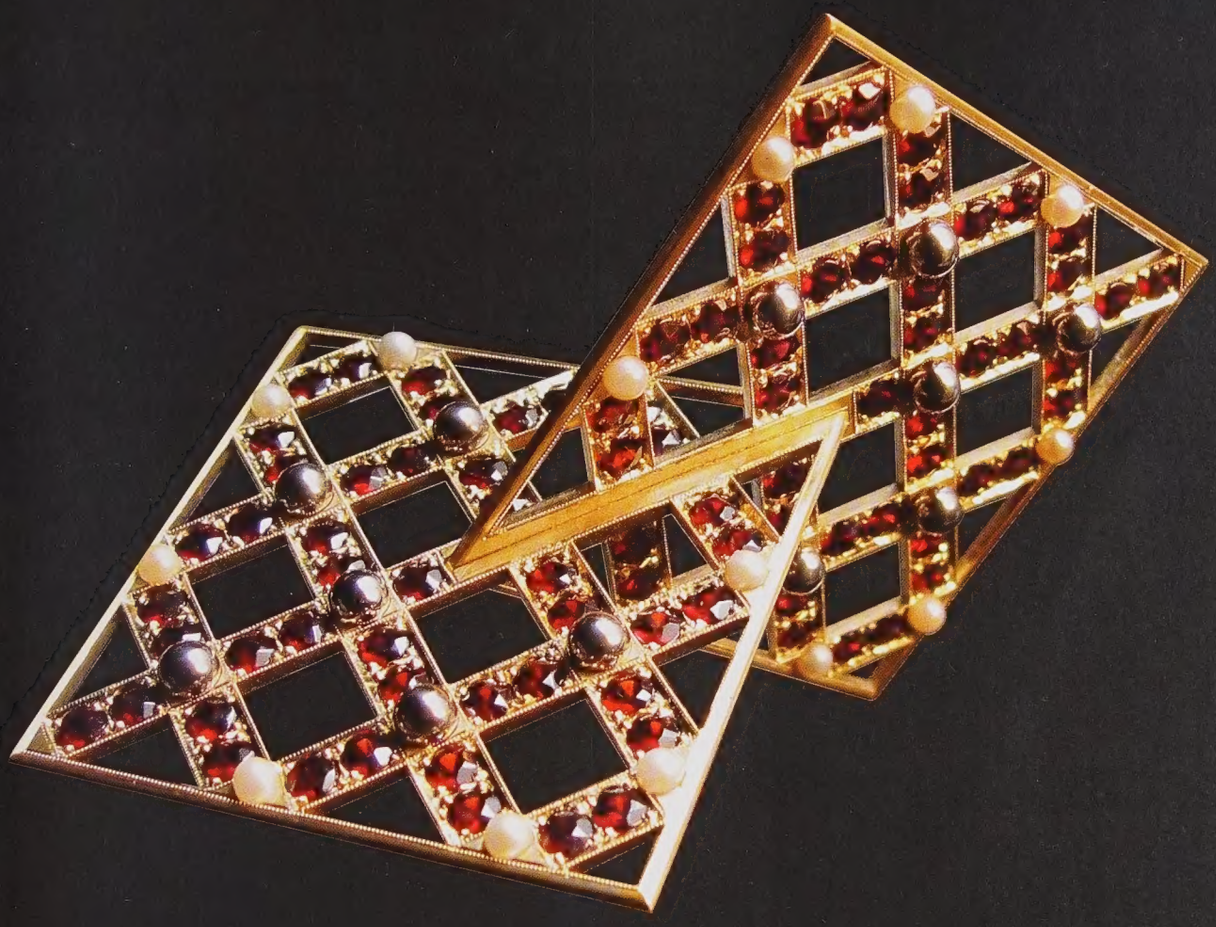

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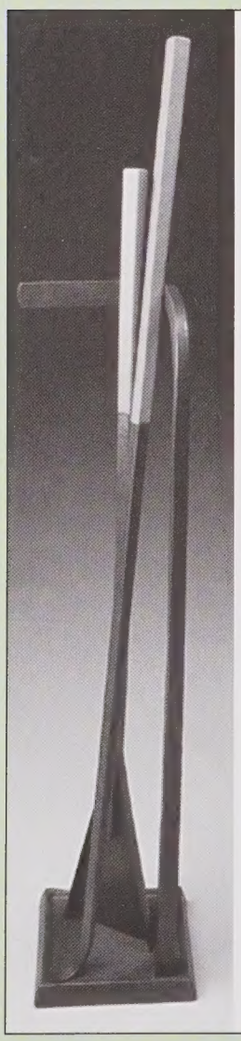

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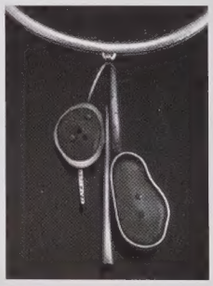

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clockwise from top

Douglas Harling
Title: Sea Saw
Description: 1-3/8"x2-1/4"x1/2", 22k gold, 14k gold pin mechanism, and freshwater pearls
Photo: Douglas Harling

Namu Cho
Title: Rings
Description: Damascus steel with 22k gold, 18k gold
Photo: Hap Sakwa Photography

(Issue #5 2006 Metalsmith)
Cover: Kevin Coates
Title: Snakes to Apples (cup) 2002
Description: height 6 1/2", nephryte jade, silver, parcel-gilt, part patinated, coral amber
Photo: Clarissa Bruce

Sarah Perkins
Title: Stubble Beggar's Bowl
Description: 3"x4"x4", copper, enamel
Photo: Sarah Perkins

Kiwon Wang
Title: Water Drop Series
Description: 2-1/2"x2-1/2"x3/8, 14k gold, pearl, sterling silver
Photo: Kiwon Wang

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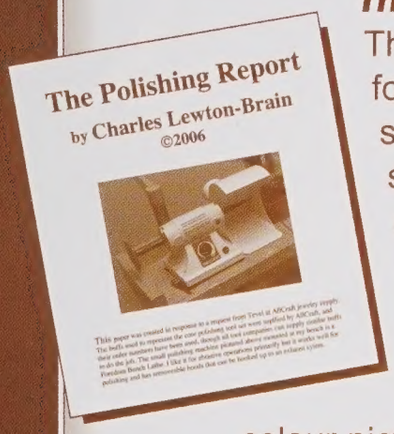

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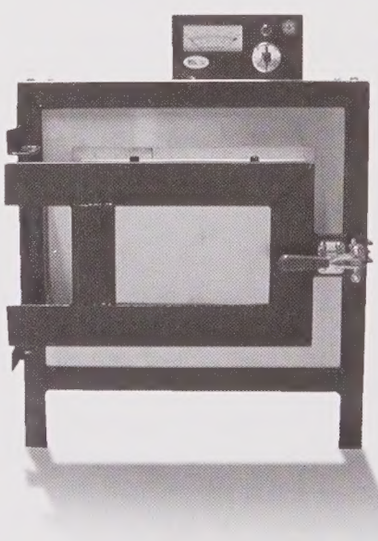

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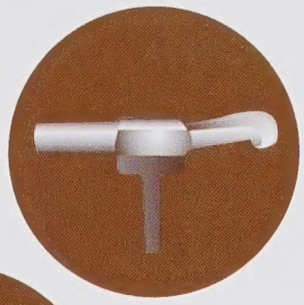

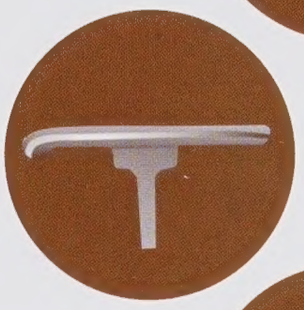

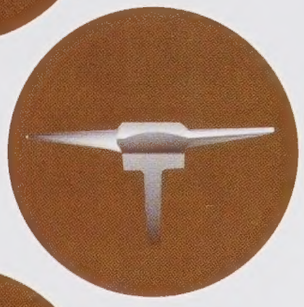

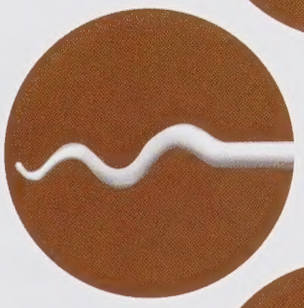

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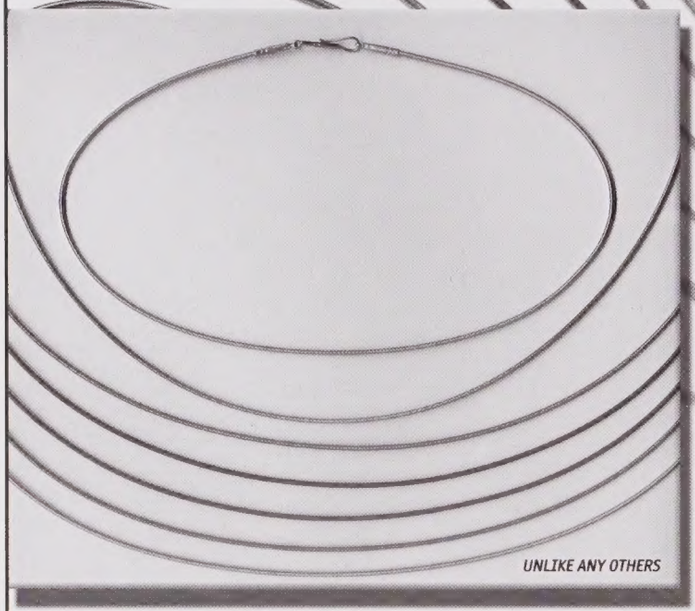

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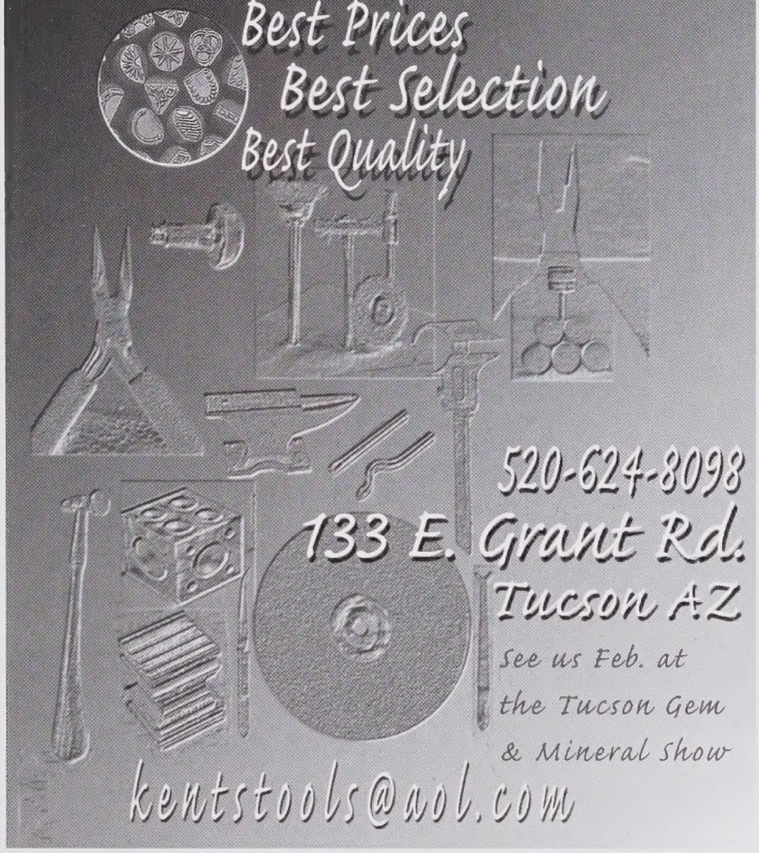

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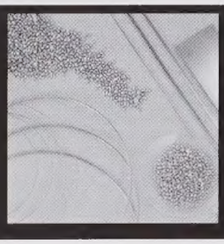

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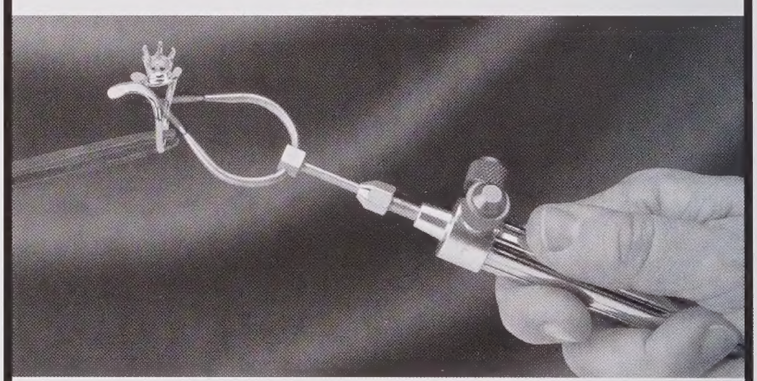

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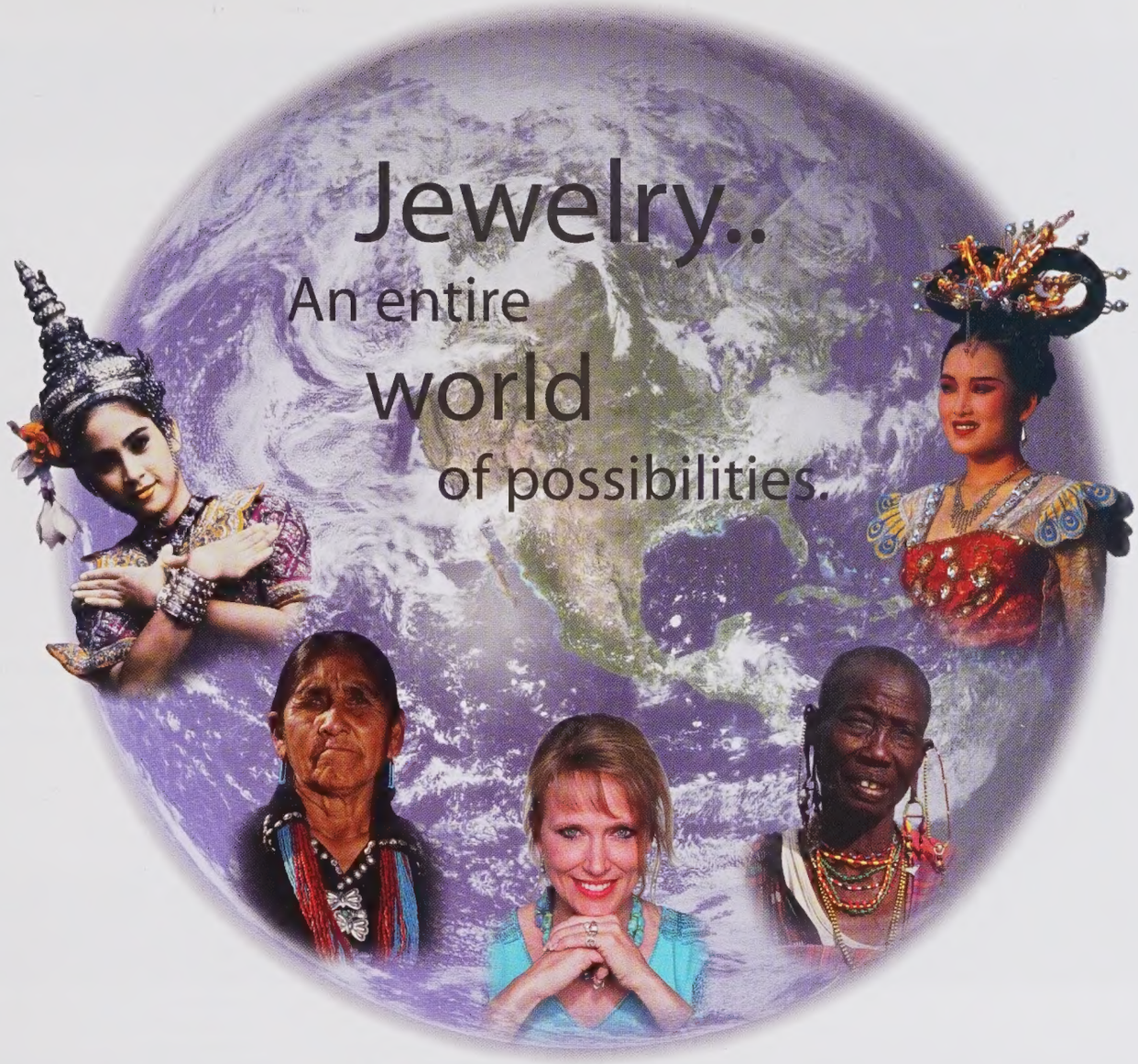

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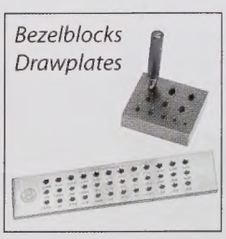

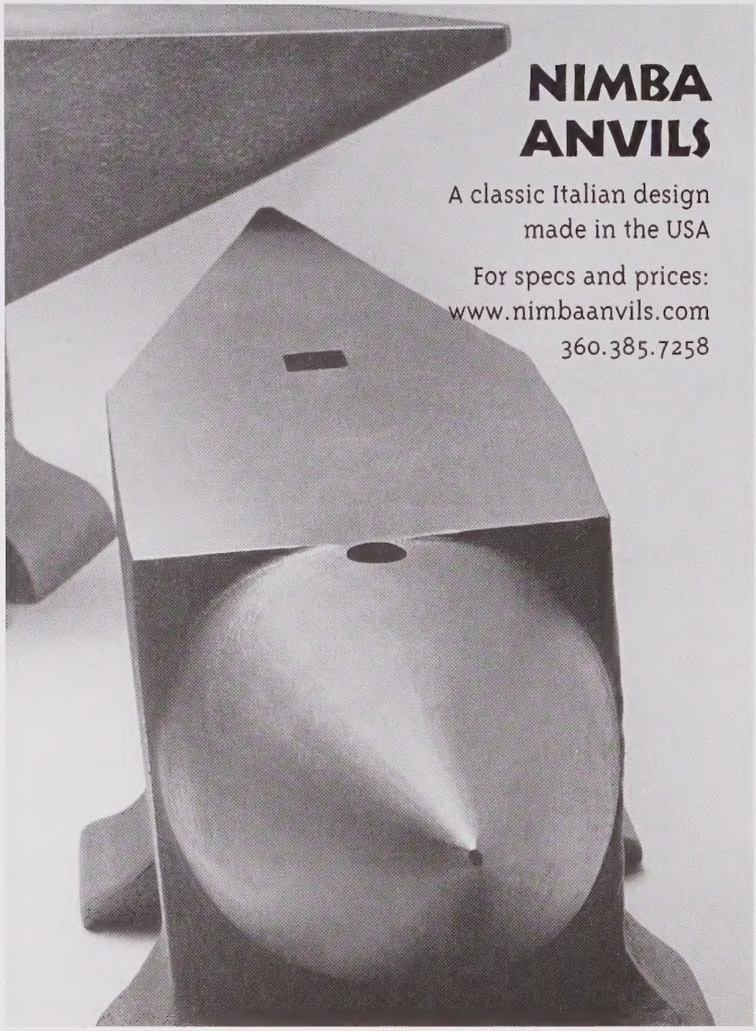

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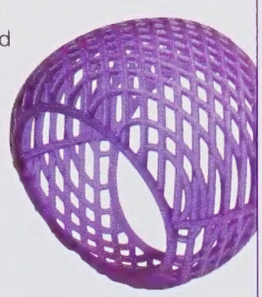

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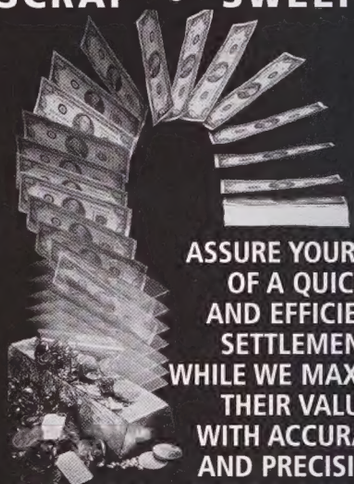

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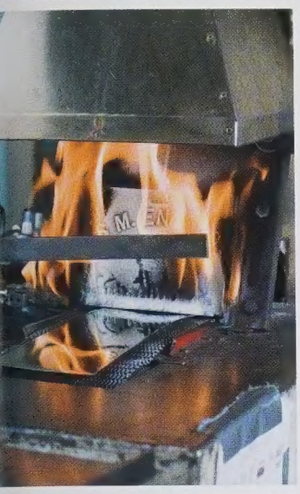

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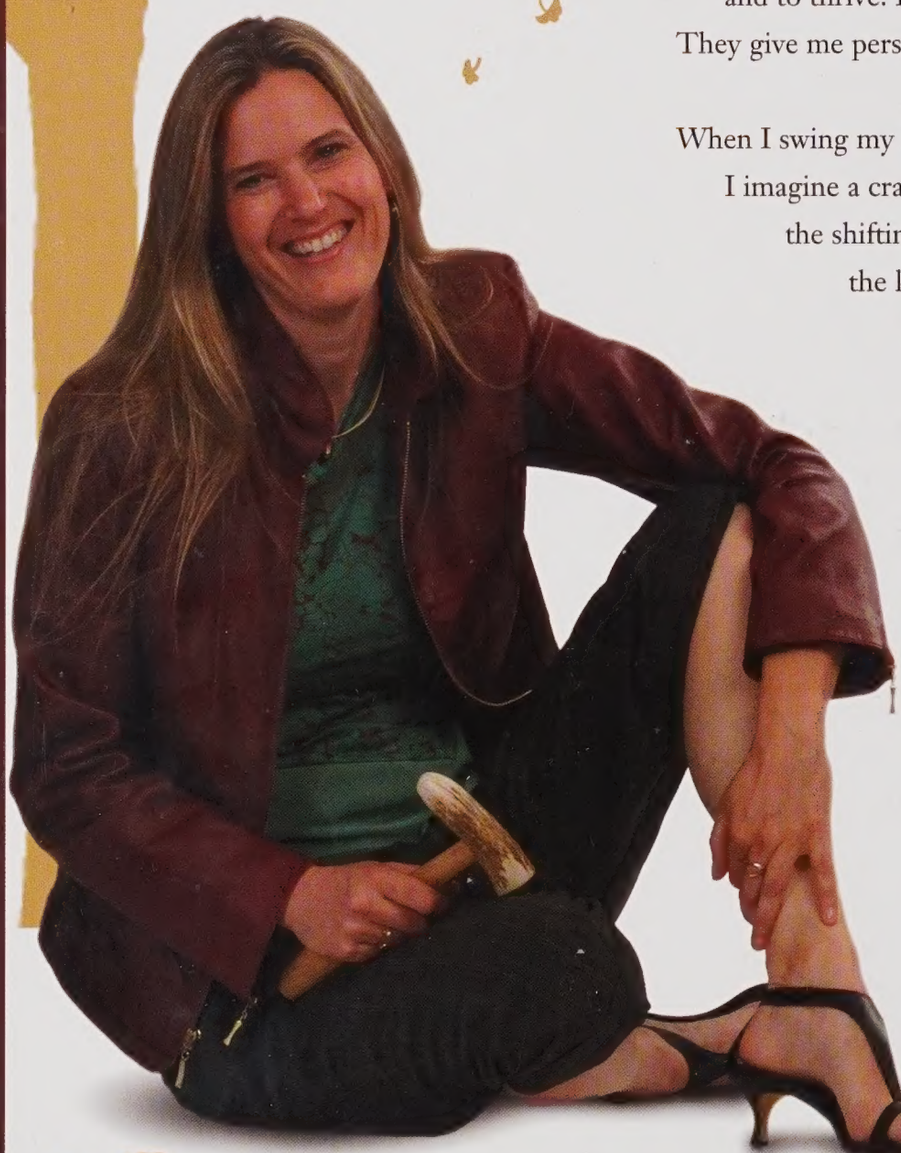
The Ginkgo first enticed me in the fall. I admired its ability to survive—everything from the Ice Age to Hiroshima. It took such incredible strength to stand alone and to thrive. I draw strength from these ancient, tenacious trees. They give me perspective; they keep me grounded.

When I swing my hammer, I think of Thor's hammer creating thunder. I imagine a crashing storm, lightning splitting the very air with the shifting polarity of positive and negative charges. It is the lotus flower, rising from dark shadows into the light. It is the hard lesson that becomes a great blessing—enlightenment.

My magical hammer creates what's in my soul. Simple geometric shapes, like the building blocks that created everything on the planet, make me feel safe and secure. Their connections—morphing separate shapes into something different—help me tap into the spiral of life. Unchangeable, yet somehow changed. Always with a piece of me in it. Uncompromised.

As an emerging artist, I love creating the storm, seeing what comes of the lightning.



Amy Burkholder
Mystic Creations
Waconia, Minnesota

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